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["I AM AT YOUR MERCY, BUT I NEVER WILL BE YOUR WIFE EXCEPT IN NAME!"]

A FEARFUL SECRET.

CHAPTER VI.

JANETA LEIGH, Mrs. Carlyle's humble companion—albeit no humiliations had ever fallen to her lot at Hillington Place—stood a little in the background as the other ladies crowded round Lord Drew and spoke their eager welcome. For a moment she felt strangely out in the cold. Mrs. Carlyle she knew was a distant relation of the new-comer—indeed, for years had been to him a kind of second mother. Janeta could understand how her kind friend's warm-hearted nature would cling to the one among her kindred who could not be suspected of mercenary designs.

Lord Drew had an ample fortune of his own. Besides, he was no kin to the late Geoffrey Carlyle, therefore he stood beyond the pale. Never by any chance would he become a "candidate," so it was natural enough that Mrs. Carlyle should delight in him; but that Mrs. Biden and her seven plain daughters should claim a right in the eccentric young nobleman seemed to Janeta absurd.

She stood apart, her beautiful eyes fixed on the fire, as though she read a story written in the flames, and she thought the while that her seven contemporaries need not have shown Lord Drew so very plainly that any one of them would have been happy to console him for Lady Claudine's treachery. Mrs. Carlyle's voice recalled her to herself.

"Nettie" said the widow gently, "come here. I want to introduce you to Lord Drew. Jack, this is my dear little friend and namesake, Janeta Leigh.

Lord Drew's hand was ready. What a true hearty grasp he had! But his keen eyes seemed reading her through and through. Janeta felt herself flush crimson. She remembered how intimate her husband had been with his cousin. Could he have told him of his brief romance and the cruel deception he had practised? Could it be that Lord Drew had heard her miserable story and knew her secret? His first words dispelled her fears.

"I told you, Miss Leigh, we should meet again?"

Mrs. Carlyle started.

"Nettie! you never told me you knew Lord Drew?"

The seven Misses Biden looked so much annoyed that Janeta recovered her composure from sheer amusement at their perturbed faces.

"I never knew I did," she returned, frankly. "I met a stranger in a train last September, and we exchanged our views on some of the problems of life; but I had no idea he was Lord Drew! I fancied, from his conversation, he was a strolling artist!"

"Miss Leigh!" in seven different tones of horror from seven young ladies, but Lord Drew was laughing heartily, and Mrs. Carlyle also.

"I'm glad I look professional!" said the peer, cheerfully. "It would be an uncomfortable idea to know I went about trying to impress people with the accident of my having a handle to my name. You are quite right, Miss Leigh! I *am* an artist—at least, it is the ambition of my life to deserve the name; and

as to strolling, I have done a great deal of that the last two years."

"Far, far too much," said Mrs. Biden, glibly. "I do hope now you are going to settle down at home!"

"I am going to settle at Hillington Place for Christmas," he returned, coolly. "That is, if my dear old aunt will admit such a roving individual."

The idea of Lord Drew's retiring to dress was promptly set aside. The party gathered anew around the table, and dinner was resumed. It certainly ended far more cheerfully than it had begun.

Lord Drew did not speak much—indeed, it struck Janeta he was unusually silent; but the very fact of his presence added a zest to the repast, and Janeta felt wickedly positive in her own mind that Mrs. Biden was casting up the virtues of her various daughters, and wondering which catalogue would prove most attractive to Lord Drew.

Laura sat next him—and Laura was, to Nettie's mind, the nicest of the family. He was kind and attentive to her, but to the companion's eye there was nothing in the least lover-like in his demeanour. Some strange impulse made Janeta watch them rather closely.

Laura had a flush of animation, and looked almost pretty, yet she was supposed to be wearing the willow for Lord Drew's cousin. The explanation was soon coming. Presently, when a bevy of voices at the other end of the table seemed likely to screen her from notice, Laura asked in a low voice, just audible enough to reach Nettie, who sat opposite,—

"Lord Drew, how is your cousin?"

The girl, who had a right to wear that cousin's wedding-ring, listened with intense anxiety for the answer.

"He's very well, Laura. I tried to persuade him to come here for Christmas; but he seemed to think he would be unwelcome. You see he has offended my aunt, and——"

"He never did anything wrong!" cried Laura, still in that suppressed voice, but with two pink spots burning in her cheeks. "I think Aunt Janeta ought to be *made* to say what she has against him. It is not fair to make a mystery of it in this way!"

Lord Drew's face grew grave. His whole manner changed.

"Believe me, Laura, your aunt has good reasons. I should have liked to see John here just for Christmas; but I think Mrs. Carlyle quite right to refuse him the old intimacy. I am very fond of him. I can't help it somehow, but even *I* confess he is not trustworthy."

"Then you have turned against him now you are rich. I think riches make people detestable!"

"I daresay they do. But I don't think I've 'turned against' John Drew, Laura! He has free quarters wherever I happen to be, and he knows whenever he is hard up my purse is open to him. I would settle an income on him directly if it were any use!"

Laura evidently thought the income would send her lover back to her.

"Then why don't you? It would be the making of him!"

"I happen to differ from you!" said Lord Drew, dryly. "Any settled income would ruin John. He would spend a quarter's cheque in a week, and if one tried to prevent that by arranging for it to be paid in instalments, he would mortgage half a year's allowance for a lump sum."

"You are hard on him!"

"I don't think so. You can't guess the pang it is to me not to be able to believe in him. We were like brothers once. I shall never love another man as I have loved John, and yet—" his voice had a thrill of sadness which touched Janeta keenly—"I can't trust him. I believe I would give half my fortune to get back my faith in him, but I can't do it. There are two things, Laura, gold cannot mend, a shattered trust and a broken heart."

Mrs. Carlyle made the signal for the ladies to retire. As she passed Lord Drew, she said with a smile,—

"You know your way to the drawing-room?"

He did, and joined them in a very few minutes.

Janeta sat behind a tray of silver and china, dispensing coffee. Lord Drew strolled up to her, and sat down.

"I little thought I should find you here, Miss Leigh! How do you like Yorkshire?"

"Every one asks me that!"

"Then I will alter my question. How do you like life at Hillington Place? Are you happy here?"

Nettie slightly altered the question again before she answered it.

"I like Hillington Place very much. Mrs. Carlyle is so kind to me; it seems like a new life!"

"Poor child!" muttered Lord Drew, half to himself. "You speak as though kindness had been rare." Then, in a different voice, "And has Hillington Place cured you of your ambitious wishes?"

"I don't think I was ambitious!"

"Pardon me! I have a distinct recollection of your telling me you wanted to be rich. I can't think of any house so suited to cure any one of such a wish as Aunt Janeta's!"

"Why?"

"Because there are so many people near who desire the same thing. When you see my aunt's 'candidates,' and their craze for wealth, I think it is enough to make anyone prefer poverty itself!"

"I feel sorry for them!"

"I feel sorry for my aunt. It was a monstrous will. Far better have named her heir or left her perfectly free. From what I can see of her affection for you, Miss Leigh, I fancy in that case you would have had your wish, and some day have found yourself a very rich woman."

Janeta shuddered.

"I don't want to be a rich woman!"

Lord Drew smiled.

"Then Hillington Place has cured you, after all?"

He little guessed it was only at that moment the desire for wealth had left her. It had flashed upon her suddenly that were she rich her husband might discover it, and insist on revealing their marriage, and her returning to him. Better any poverty than that, for every fibre of Janeta's heart echoed Lord Drew's own words, "No gold can restore a shattered faith."

Christmas passed, the candidates arrived, were feasted and made much of. Then they left, as anxious as ever. The Bidens stayed till the utmost limits to which their invitation could be stretched, and till they had made themselves detested by all the other candidates. Then at last February came, and found Mrs. Carlyle and Janeta with but one guest, Lord Drew.

He often talked of going home. Indeed, Alandyke had been prepared to receive him; but it was a lonely place for a single man, and he had almost a son's affection for Mrs. Carlyle, so he lingered on at Hillington, much to that lady's delight; for she was too true a woman not to take a pleasure in match-making, and she had conceived the bold design of making her favourite Jack happy by marrying him to bright-eyed Nettie Leigh.

She never said a word of her wishes. She knew silence was her best chance of success. Lord Drew's early disappointment would make him chary of having a wife selected for him, and Janeta—well, with all her love for the girl, Mrs. Carlyle often confessed to herself she could not quite understand her old friend's child.

So the wily widow said never a word of her own hopes. She sent Lord Drew and Nettie on errands together, as composedly as though they had been brother and sister. She gave them every chance and opportunity for falling in love, and then she waited patiently for the result.

She made no concealment about her *protégée's* history. Indeed, Janeta herself was on most points open as the day. Lord Drew knew all about her hard life at Normanton, and the scanty affection meted out to her by her aunt. He heard of the shabby dresses and the schoolgirls, and even of her coming to Brixton, and her first visit to Mrs. Carlyle. It seemed to him the girl's history was before him as an open book. He never noticed that of the month spent at Dorbury she made no mention, unless compelled, and then gave short uncommunicative answers.

"This is very beautiful!" said Jack, one day, when he and Nettie had been driving Mrs. Carlyle to a distant cottage, and were extending their drive during her charitable visit. "I have knocked about a great deal the last two years, but I never saw anything finer than the Yorkshire hills!"

"Isn't that only another way of saying, 'there's no place like home?'" asked Miss Leigh.

"Perhaps! I own I am inordinately fond of Yorkshire. You are a southerner, Miss Leigh. Which is your native county?"

"I was born in London; but I lived longest at Normanton."

"And you have been to Dorbury. Dorset is pretty."

"I hate it!"

The words seemed wrung from her almost in spite of herself. Lord Drew felt puzzled.

"I thought the first time I met you you shared my admiration for Dorbury? It is a dear little place."

"I was happy then," said Janeta, in a strange, dreamy voice, "but please don't talk of it, Lord Drew. I can't bear to think of Dorbury!"

"Why not?"

"I can't explain it to you. It was the turning point of my life!—the end of all the miserable drudgery and poverty at Normanton. I suppose that's why!"

"Do you know I have quite an extensive encampment stowed away at Dorbury. I had been thinking of setting up my huts again there next spring, and getting you and Aunt Janeta to put up at the hotel, and be my frequent guests!"

Nettie trembled, as though smitten with a sudden fear.

"Please don't," she said, in a sad, pathetic voice, from which she tried in vain to check the sobs. "Lord Drew, I *can't* explain it to you; but please don't ask your aunt to take me to Dorbury. I think it would break my heart."

Lord Drew looked at her gravely.

"Did any heavy trouble befall you there? Forgive the question; but you *know* I do not put it out of curiosity. Nettie, can't you trust me?"

"Better than anyone else in the world," said Janeta, quietly; "but I can't explain this to you. I was happy at Dorbury! Life seemed just like a bright dream to me. I was full of glad expectation, when I left the place to come to London, and seek my fortune."

Lord Drew looked puzzled.

"And you saw my aunt the very next day? I don't think she has let life press very hardly on you since. Why should all your glad expectations have failed?"

Nettie shook her head.

"You had a friend with you at Dorbury. Did you quarrel? Girls do, sometimes, you know."

"I could not have quarrelled with Nathalie. She was almost the first creature who loved me; and she was such a dear, sunny-tempered, little thing! I used to call her my West Indian humming bird. Oh, no; Nathalie and I never quarrelled. She was very good to me, and we used to plan that when Mr. Duval came home I should go and live with him and Nathalie, if he did not object to a second daughter."

"I think my aunt will object to the plan very much indeed, and *I* am sure *I* shall!"

"It will never come to pass. Nathalie caught a cold at Christmas time. She was never very strong; and they wrote and told me early this year she was dead!"

She tears flowed down Nettie's cheeks.

She had grieved very truly for her dear little friend, and almost hated herself for feeling that her secret was the safer since Nathalie was the only living creature who knew of her intimacy with "Mr. John."

"Then that explains it all," said Lord Drew, cheerfully. "Of course, you hate Dorbury because it is connected with Miss Duval; you would not like to go back to it because it would remind you of her?"

"I never thought of that."

"But, nevertheless, it is the reason. You must forget the South, Nettie, and cast in your life with us North-country people. Your father has done so already. He told me the other day he should never leave Yorkshire."

For Captain Leigh and his wife had been to the Place for three days; and Mrs. Carlyle, noting Jack's attentions to Nettie's people, decided in her own mind the match she longed for would certainly come off.

A notion of the same kind had also entered the Captain's brain, and made him affectionate, and almost deferential, in his manner to his eldest daughter.

"Papa is sure to stop at Sandford," said Janeta, frankly, "because Ada has a house there, and they live rent-free. That is a great consideration for him."

"I like her—Mrs. Leigh, I mean—she seems so true!"

"I think truth is your favourite virtue," said Janeta, dreamily. "The first time I ever saw you you told me nothing mattered so long as one was true."

"And you have remembered that ever since?"

"Ever since."

Mrs. Carlyle, who had walked to meet them, here appeared and interrupted the *tête-à-tête*.

Had she only known the avowal trembling on Jack's lips, she would rather have walked ten miles in the other direction than have postponed the accomplishment of her darling's scheme.

But she had no suspicion how fateful was her sudden arrival; and took her place beside Janeta with the utmost complacency.

"You had better drive straight home, Jack," she said to Lord Drew. "It is getting late, and I am longing for a cup of tea."

It was the pleasantest hour of the twenty-four, to Lord Drew's mind, when the little family gathered in the old oak hall, and Nettie poured out tea for him and Mrs. Carlyle.

Often the latter, tired with her walk or drive, leant back in her chair, half asleep; and he and Nettie were virtually *tête-à-tête*.

She used to look so slight and childlike in her heavy velvet gown, the firelight falling on her pretty hair, and burning it to threads of gold.

It was always thus he loved to picture her in the sad, dark aftertime, when they two were parted asunder as utterly as though oceans had rolled between them. Always thus, as the little household fairy, he loved to think of her.

A maid came and took the ladies' wraps.

The tea was brought in, and Nettie took her place behind the silver urn.

She had sat like this dozens of times, and yet Lord Drew thought he had never seen her look so sweet, so lovable before.

Mrs. Carlyle, contrary to her habit, was wide awake and talkative.

There was no chance of resuming that interrupted *tête-à-tête*; and yet Lord Drew was well content as he sat next Janeta, and thought how pretty a picture she would make transplanted to his grand old home.

"We really must give a party," Mrs. Carlyle was saying in her low, musical voice. "The Biden girls—except the ones who have forsaken the world—have bothered my life out about it for months; and now their father's old regiment is quartered in the neighbourhood seems a famous opportunity. I should have settled it days ago, only I thought, Jack, perhaps you would be having some entertainment at Alandyke, and I did not want to clash with that."

"Do you mean to hint, you inhospitable lady, that you are getting tired of me?" inquired Jack, lightly. "Are you really anxious for me to take my departure, and leave you and Miss Leigh to your peaceful solitude?"

"You know I want you as long as you can stay, Jack; but—people expect you to do something."

"I *hate* balls," he confessed; "but I'll dance at yours with pleasure, and people must give up expecting me to be hospitable. I have no talent for that sort of thing. Alandyke must wait for guests until it has a mistress to entertain them, if such a day ever comes."

"It will come right enough," said Mrs. Carlyle, a little vexed at his calmness. "If *you* think no one under an angel good enough for you, John Drew won't be so particular when he is Lord of Alandyke."

There was a sound of falling china, a crash of breaking—Janeta had let one of the delicate cups fall to the ground.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Carlyle, kindly, "What are you trembling for? Do you imagine I am going to beat you? There are cups enough in the house for twenty to be broken without any serious inconvenience. Why, your teeth are actually trembling. My dear, this is being too nervous!"

"I could not help it," murmured Janeta. "It slipped right out of my hand."

"No wonder," said Jack, simply, "for your fingers are as cold as ice. Come near the fire, and warm them."

She knelt on the hearthrug for a few seconds with the pretty hands stretched before the welcome blaze; then she rose abruptly, and said she would go upstairs.

"She looks like a sheet!" said Mrs. Carlyle, when the door had closed on her. "She can't be well. I never thought her nervous or fanciful before."

"And I have often fancied she was nervous or overstrung," said Lord Drew. "Do you think her father worries her for money? He looks just the sort of man."

Mrs. Carlyle shook her head.

"I *know* he has never asked her for a halfpenny. She sent him a Christmas present, for Mrs. Leigh told me as much. The Captain is rather careless about money matters, but he is a gentleman—he would not prey on his own child."

"But are you sure of it?"

"I am positive! A little while ago I asked Nettie if they were poor, and she told me they had a small, fixed income. No, it is not that."

"And she has no love affair?—no trouble of that kind?"

"Of course she hasn't!" declared Mrs. Carlyle. "Why, she'd never seen a young man except her cousins till she came here. And you don't suppose she is the kind of girl to lose her heart to one of the 'candidates?' She sees no one else here."

"I thought"—he spoke slowly, as one who weighs his words—"I mean I fancied she was not happy. Not so happy as one would expect your adopted child to be."

"Well, she fretted a great deal about that child at Normanton; and you know she had a sad time before she came to me. *I* find no fault with Nettie. I should hate a companion who was always giggling."

"So should I."

"Nettie suits me exactly," went on Mrs. Carlyle. "If only she does not marry I shall think myself lucky."

"And you will cordially detest the man who trys to rob you of her?"

Mrs. Carlyle looked at him keenly.

"Not if he made her happy."

To Mrs. Carlyle's own mind Janeta's sudden nervousness admitted but of one explanation. It was at the mere suggestion that John Drew might yet be Lord of Alandyke she had lost composure. Now that suggestion implied Jack's death.

Too loyal to Nettie to breathe the suspicion to the man concerned, the widow saw in the girl's agitation a positive proof that her plans had succeeded with one of her intended victims.

Nettie must love Lord Drew, or she would not have betrayed such emotion at the bare idea of his death.

"Men are born simpletons," decided the widow. "Why didn't he see that as well as I did? But Jack seems very much taken with her; and he's not the sort of man to do anything in a hurry. I shall have my way yet, and see my pretty Nettie Lady of Alandyke, and that hateful John Drew dethroned from his position as heir-presumptive!"

The dressing-bell rang out clear and sharp.

Mrs. Carlyle rose to leave the hall.

"I shall tell Nettie not to come to dinner if she feels tired. I don't want the child knocked up."

"It might be better to send for the doctor," suggested Jack, anxiously. "I don't like these sudden chills."

"I will send if it seems necessary; but I expect she will be all right in the morning," said Mrs. Carlyle, much mollified by his concern.

She went upstairs to the pretty rooms she had delighted to beautify and make homelike for her favourite.

Nettie was in the little study, lying on the sofa, her beautiful eyes closed, and an expression of anguish on her fair young face which went to her friend's heart.

The eyes are the windows of the soul; from them our thoughts and feelings are disclosed to our fellow-creatures; but let the "windows" be closed, and the story is revealed even more clearly by the other features which in our waking, active life are little studied.

It was so now with Janeta. Mrs. Carlyle saw, with concern, the lines of pain about the small mouth, the shadow on the brow. Jack was right. This was not the face of a "happy" girl, but what trouble could Janeta have? What thorn could have crept into the path she would so fain have strewn with roses?

Nettie was not asleep. Even as her friend bent over her she opened her eyes and whispered,—

"I am so sorry!"

"My dear girl, I shall be seriously angry mention that wretched cup again. I want to know if you are ill or in trouble? You look like a little ghost!"

"I am quite well."

"Then why do you look so pale?"

"I am very tired," said Janeta, faintly, "and my head aches; but, indeed, I am not ill. I think if I stayed here instead of coming down to dinner I should be all right in the morning."

"You had much better go to bed," decided her friend, "and Nancy shall bring your dinner there."

"I could not eat anything. I feel so tired."

"Then, dear, take my advice, and go to bed. I will come up and look at you before I go to my own room, and I shall send for the doctor the first thing to-morrow. Now remember, Nettie, you *must* get better."

Nettie smiled automatically.

"I am not ill—only tired."

"But, my dear, people don't get tired all in a second, and you were quite right when we came home."

With many a fond caress she left Janeta, and the maid Nancy soon appeared to help the young lady to bed; but Nettie had a wonderful influence over servants. Those at Hillington all well-nigh worshipped her, and she soon made Nancy understand she preferred to remain on the sofa, and also that she did not want the news of her disobedience carried to Mrs. Carlyle.

Ding, ding, dong, the bell for dinner. The meal was a sumptuous one, and lasted some time. For a whole hour Janeta was safe from observation; and, with a weary sigh, she drew

the silver lamp a little nearer to the sofa, and took from her pocket a half-sheet of crumpled paper.

Mrs. Carlyle had been right and yet wrong in her surmise. That careless speech about John Drew's coming in for Alandyke *had* been the cause of Janeta's agitation, but she had never dreamed of his cousin's death. Stray mentions of her husband always upset the girl, and this particular one broke down all her self command, for it recalled to her how strong was Mr. Drew's stake in Yorkshire, and how unlikely it was he would let many months pass by without an attempt at reconciliation with his family.

She had gone upstairs chiefly to escape from Mrs. Carlyle's questions, and as she walked down the long corridor she had well-nigh reasoned herself into calmness; for her friend's disapproval of the absent nephew was so strongly expressed in voice and manner, it seemed evident *she* could not make him welcome, while such of the candidates as lived near her would hardly risk her favour by giving an asylum to the scapegrace. No, it was only an idle fear, and she had been very foolish to let it trouble her.

This was Nettie's decision when she reached her own room; but what she found there not only made her change her mind, but filled her with a nameless horror; with a pain so real and bitter she felt, poor girl, she would have given all she had in the world, ay, even her life itself, to undo that morning's work when she stood with John Drew in a grim old City church, and promised to love and honour him till death did them part.

Solemn words those last. If the girl's (and there are many, alas! year by year) who stand in their bridal veils and whisper these words so blithely, thinking chiefly of the additional amount of status, wealth, power, or ornaments to be gained by wifehood—if these girls, I say, thought but for one half-hour seriously of what it means to vow one's whole life away, surely they would pause!

For ever—for ever in this world they vow away their freedom, the right to choose their own friends, associates, interests, hopes, and home. When a girl loves her future husband as her own soul there are yet many things she has to yield to secure a peaceful, happy home. How, then, will it be for those who marry from any other motive?

For life, too, I have heard it said a bad wife is a man's curse, but what is a bad husband to a woman? A man at least, if unhappy in domestic life, has his trade or profession. He can absent himself for hours every day, can at least choose and ordain his manner of living, the people he will know, the place he will inhabit; and, if worse come to worst, if the chain he has forged prove utterly unbearable, he can, without loss of honour, of character, of esteem, snap its links by accepting occupation in some distant spot, and purchase his exemption from his wife's company by a provision for her at home suited to his means.

A woman can do nothing of all this. For her there is but a mute endurance; a dull, prolonged suffering, as hard to bear, ay, and harder than a sharp, keen pain; and the worst of it is, it seems to me a man may make his wife profoundly miserable, and break her heart without, at the same time, breaking one of the laws of the Decalogue.

He may be an eloquent preacher, a skilful doctor, or a brave soldier, and yet the torture of his home.

He may preach angelic sermons, and point the way to Heaven in glowing language, and yet crush every hope out of his wife's heart.

Such men, thank Heaven, are rare, but they do exist; and so, instead of rushing so eagerly into the bonds of matrimony—so quickly riveted, so hard to break—it seems to me girls would do well to pause and ponder—to preach to themselves, as it were, a little sermon on the text "As long as ye both shall live."

Well, Janeta Leigh had not done this. She had rushed headlong into matrimony, and now, perhaps, you think she deserved but little pity for her wrecked life and broken hopes! But look at the blanched face, the pitiful, shaking fingers with which she caught sight of a letter awaiting her on her writing-table, and the hardest-hearted of her judges must fain pity her.

It was an ordinary envelope, and addressed in a man's hand to "Miss Leigh," but in the corner was the one date, September 2nd, and it told its own story. Only one person in the whole world knew what that day was to Janeta.

She tore open the envelope. It disclosed only half a sheet of paper, but the contents of this were enough to dismay any woman's heart.

"MADAM —If I have kept silence hitherto it has been because I believed the insinuation in your letter, viz., that you had sought death in preference to my society, a device with which I was powerless to interfere.

"I have since discovered that you are living in luxury at Hillington Place (which ought one day to be mine), and masquerading as the adopted daughter of my aunt, Mrs. Carlyle. It is also reported you contemplate the offence of bigamy by contracting an illegal marriage with my cousin, Lord Drew. Understand, once for all, I will not keep your secret if this is to be my reward.

"I don't want to remove you from the Place. I can't afford to support you, and as I hear you have unlimited influence with the old lady you might easily get me reinstated in her favour. If Drew is fool enough to fancy your pretty face, it may prevent him from cutting me out of Alandyke, by bringing home a wife of his own.

"I will put two alternatives before you—silence as to your past on condition you obtain my prompt recall to my aunt's favour, and speedily fall in love with me, when we could be married over again publicly, and keep the first ceremony private.

"We should, in that case, come in certainly for Hillington, and enjoy a good income during my aunt's life; while if it is true my cousin has succumbed to your fascinations he would doubtless remain a bachelor for your sake.

"This, you observe, my dear, is the *best* plan for both our interests, which are, or ought to be, identical.

"My case *can't* be worse with my aunt than it is now; so if you refuse my terms I shall simply acquaint her with our marriage, and prove to her you have lived in her house all these months under a false name, and doubtless listened to all kind of blame of your husband.

"If there's one thing my aunt can't forgive it's deceit, and if there's a virtue she *does* insist on in wives it's obedience. You know best, therefore, what she must think of your conduct.

"I am staying in the village, and wish to see you as soon as possible, I will be in the west shrubbery every evening at nine o'clock for three nights. If you do not come I shall conclude you dare me to do my worst. There is a moon, so you will find no inconvenience in meeting me.

"Remember you have to do with a man whom fate has made desperate.

"J. D."

Poor Janeta! Her worst enemy must have pitied her had they seen the hunted, scared look with which she laid down the cruel letter. She flung herself on the sofa and tried to think, but she had found no way of escape from her perplexities when Mrs. Carlyle came in.

Her kindness, her almost motherly concern and tenderness, nearly broke down poor Nettie's self command. She longed to fling her arms round her friend's neck, and sob out her miserable story; but two powerful motives held her back.

She knew Mrs. Carlyle's character very well, and John Drew was right in saying that deceit was simply unpardonable to her; while probably, because she herself had been an idolized wife, given her own way in everything, the widow held old-fashioned views as to the conjugal bond, and believed that nothing save absolute cruelty or bodily injury should create revolt in the weaker partner. This was one cause of Janeta's anguish; the other was more painful still.

The taunt put so abruptly in the letter—the cruel insinuation her beauty had won Lord Drew's heart—awoke the girl to a secret she had never suspected.

She who had thought to pass through life unloving—who had believed her heart was a closed book—she had learned too late what love meant. The slumbering heart had awoke. She loved the stern, somewhat cynical man who at their first meeting had rebuked her ambition!

The first feeling was horror at her own unworthiness, of amazed terror that she, a wedded wife, should care for any man but her husband.

Her second was a firm resolve that no one in the world should ever discover her miserable mistake—that from henceforth she would shun Lord Drew's very presence.

No; she *could* not tell Mrs. Carlyle her secret, for Mrs. Carlyle would tell him. He must not, should not, know that she was his cousin's wife—that she was bound hand and foot to the man he could never trust again.

Instead of going to bed, as we have seen, Janeta dismissed her maid, first arranging Nancy should manage for Mrs. Carlyle not to disturb her.

Left alone she went into her dressing-room, and took out a long fur-lined cloak. Wrapping herself in this, and drawing the hood closely over her head, Janeta felt herself disguised in some measure.

It was a perilous undertaking. The trysting-place named by her husband was quite a mile from the house, and if Mrs. Carlyle heard of her attempting such an expedition in her weak state she would guess at once she had been deceived.

Janeta's own proud nature shrank from the nocturnal meeting. It was gall to her to creep out by stealth, like some maid-servant going to meet her lover; but she was in John Drew's power. She could not defy him just yet. She must, at least, grant the interview he had demanded.

In spite of the warm cloak she shivered as she passed out into the chill February air. The moon was up, and Janeta crept along the most secluded path, hoping its soft, silvery beam would not betray her to any watchful eyes.

Strange though it may seem, she had even now thought of nothing to say. Her husband's two alternatives seemed burnt into her brain; but either of them was too terrible to think of. Surely he would have mercy! He had seemed so kind and good-natured in those far-off Dorbury days. Could he have changed entirely since then?

The clock struck nine as she reached the shrubbery. Her heart came into her mouth as she saw the tall, familiar figure awaiting her.

Mr. Drew had also been chary of casual recognition. He wore a round wide-awake hat, slouching over his eyes, and a rough pea-jacket, and shooting gaiters. He looked more like a groom or a gamekeeper than the heir-presumptive to an English peerage.

He smiled when he caught sight of Nettie—such a cruel, crafty smile! Any hope she might have had fled when she saw that smile.

She leant against a tree for support, and said nothing. Her lips refused to speak the most ordinary greeting. Had she uttered the cry of her aching heart she would have exclaimed with the king of old Bible days,—

"Hast thou found me, oh! my enemy?" but she forced all complaint back, and stood there before her husband, pale and silent—her beautiful eyes full of a kind of wild, eager look.

"You need not look so scared!" said Mr. Drew, condescendingly. "If only you'll hear reason I shall think it was the best day's work that ever happened, your coming to Hillington Place. My aunt is so vindictive I was in despair of softening her; but people tell me you can twist her round your little finger, and I hope it's true?"

"It is not true!" said Janets, slowly. "Mrs. Carlyle has been most kind to me; but I do not profess to have any influence over her."

"Never mind professions! You do pretty much as you like, I imagine. The Hillington air agrees with you too. Old married people like us don't need to exchange compliments; but I assure you I never saw you look more charming. I feel quite proud of my wife!"

"The wife whom you obtained by fraud!"

"I think, my dear, you would have a slight difficulty in proving that. You'd much better let bygones be bygones. A little more effort on your part, and we shall be installed here very comfortably as heir and heiress of Hillington Place!"

"Never! I would rather die first!"

John lifted his eyebrows with admirable calm.

"Do I understand that one of the 'candidates' has impressed you so favourably you shrink from depriving him of his chance? All's fair in such a rivalry, I assure you."

"I care nothing about the candidates," cried the girl, passionately; "but I will never live anywhere with you. I am not a gentle Griselda like woman. You deceived me cruelly. You made my life one terrible entanglement—and——I hate you!"

John Drew shrugged his shoulders.

"Your language is more forcible than elegant. It's bad form to be so vehement, my dear!"

She turned on him with flashing eyes.

"I am at your mercy. I know in a moment's madness I married you, but I will never be your wife except in name. It is in your power to proclaim my secret, and to make my life a living pain; but I warn you, you will injure yourself as well as me. I will never try to help you, if you do this thing. I will never stay here, and read the scorn in your aunt's eyes. I would rather run away!"

"Pray have you considered at all where you would run to?" he asked, sneeringly. "Remember people look rather distrustfully on fugitive wives, and I should not keep silence as to the lie between us."

She bit her lip wildly.

"Are you a monster?" she asked bitterly. "What pleasure can you have in torturing me?"

"I do not wish to do so. I repeat, our future lies in your hands. Use your influence to get me once more the *entrée* of the Place. In three months I shall be your acknowledged lover; in six I can openly assume the title of your husband. You will have all the ease and luxury you thought to procure last September by accepting my hand; and as to me, I am not a bad-tempered man, and I assure you I am willing to start afresh. If you are not the heiress I once thought you, you are the most attractive girl I ever met. I see no reason why we should not make a very good thing of our lives even now. I adore beauty; you worship gold. Carry out my programme, and we shall each have our desire."

"And if I refuse?"

He looked at her steadily.

"You won't do that."

"If I do?"

"I shall go straight to the Place and ask to see my aunt. I don't think the servants would dare to refuse me admission. Then I should tell her plainly her very fascinating *protegée* was my wife, and as I didn't care for Mrs. John Drew to remain where her husband was not welcome, I meant to remove you from her house at once."

"She would not give me up."

John Drew smiled.

"My dear, you evidently know very little of the law of your country, as it affects married folks. No wife has a right to desert her husband without just cause, such as cruelty, neglect, and so on. I can't see what reason you can give for your very extraordinary flight from my protection. It won't impress either my aunt or anyone else very favourably, I fancy, if you say you ran away because I had not the title and fortune with which your fancy had endowed me."

He could hear the beating of her heart, but he could form no idea of her purpose from the almost statuesque composure of her beautiful face. Her two hands were locked nervously together, otherwise she was perfectly calm; her eyes were raised to the star-lit sky, almost as though she appealed to Heaven itself against his cruelty; but she spoke no word, gave no sign, and John Drew grew impatient for his answer.

"Well," he cried abruptly. "What is it to be? Don't stand there staring at the sky. Just tell me plainly what we are to be—friends or foes?"

(To be continued.)

ROY'S INHERITANCE.

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CHAPTER XXIV.—*(continued.)*

Lord Mountfalcon bent forward, and said in a low voice,—

"When was Philip last at the Castle?"

"I don't know," wondering why he should ask the question.

"Was he there to-day?"

"He might have been. I don't know where he dined."

"Ah! he was away!" nodding his head slowly. "Some years ago he was much in love with the Duchess of Yorkshire."

"Then perhaps he has gone to help her now?"

"Yes, to get rid of her husband," with a grim smile.

There was a long pause, during which Nora stood in miserable uncertainty half-way between the Viscount and the door. Why had Philip Falconer opened the shutter? Why had he seemed to expect the fire, and looked so aghast at the first sight of it? Hearing a step in the hall she rushed out, determined to solve the dreadful doubt that possessed her, if she possibly could.

Without giving herself time to consider what he would think of her, she went up to him as he was scrambling into his ulster. A small black bag which he had hastily packed stood on the hall-table.

"Mr. Falconer, were you at the Castle to-day?" she asked, looking straight up into his face with earnest eyes.

He stared at her, as if he were demented.

"At—at the Castle?" he stammered. "No. Ten miles in a different direction. I wish to Heaven the fire were here!" he hissed out between his shaking teeth; "and the old man locked in the furthest corner!"

"Your own father! Have you lost your senses?" she cried in horror.

"Please, sir, Mr. Andrews wants to know if you intend to go with the engine?" said Venables from the door which led to the servants' rooms.

"With what engine? I don't understand!" catching up his bag, and making his way towards the front door.

"The fire-engine, sir. As you were such a friend of the family," hurrying in front of him so as to be ready to open the door if he persisted in wishing to go out. "Andrews thought you might like——"

"What the deuce does he mean by thinking about it?" with a sudden burst of passion. "I've other business to attend to! Let him mind his own! I never was a friend of the family—I swear I wasn't! Be quick and let me out."

The door was thrown open, and the red glare from the burning Castle shone upon Philip Falconer's ghastly face.

"Go and save the poor Duke!" and Nora laid her little hand upon his arm. "You'll be sorry for it some day if you don't!" with earnest entreaty in her eyes.

He seemed to shrink into himself, and his under-lip quivered, though he shook off her hand roughly.

Then he raised his right arm, and pointed to the crimson sky.

"I swear by the Heaven above us that I'd blow out my brains now, on this doorstep, if I could save that man's useless life by the sacrifice of my own!" and then, without another word, he hurried down the steps, and under the trees of the avenue; and that crimson light pursued him wherever he went, as if wrapping him round in a sea of blood.

A feeling of awe and dread stole over Nora as she stood there, motionless as a figure of marble, watching the Viscount's only son departing with his father's curse upon his guilty head.

It seemed such a horrible thing, this wrenching of family ties, this violent up-rooting of time-hallowed affections!

Here a home destroyed by anger and fierce suspicion, and over there, not many miles away, the eager, hungry fire eating its way into another home, carrying destruction on its fiery breath!

She looked up at the starry heavens, as if in search of peace, but there was no peace to be found in the sky when that fierce light was telling of the work of ruin as it spread from one horizon to the other.

"Twenty years ago, as I stood on this step," said the Viscount's hollow voice close behind her, "my eldest boy, Victor, the one I loved, was brought home dead, carried up the avenue on a gate! The other hunted scores of times, and never fell, and never broke a bone, and then men talk to me of a God of justice!"

He drew a deep breath, and leant against the frame of the doorway for support.

"It was a woman's work—his wife's own nagging tongue—that sent him out to his day's sport with an addled brain, and a heart half-broken. He put his horse, they told me, at everything like a man possessed; but I knew the reason of it, and I cursed that woman on her death-bed, when she was crying over the boy she had to leave behind. Oh! there was no love lost between us, but I liked the boy!" his haggard eyes lifted dreamily to the sky.

Oh! if by one word she could soften his heart to his absent grandson, what an infinite amount of trouble and heartburning it would save! very timidly she began,—

"And don't you like him still!"

"No," with a heavy frown. "He deceived me, and I never forgive. I thought and hoped that he was like his father once; but he was cut out of the same pattern as his uncle—a gambler, a spendthrift, a man of low principles, and loose morals."

"No, no, no!" she cried, unable to restrain herself. "He is the best, the most honourable man that ever lived. There is no one like him!"

"What do you know of him?" in a tone of surprised displeasure.

"I met him at Lady Clavering's, and he was very kind to me," hanging her head with a burning blush.

"Pshaw! Is that all?" in angry contempt. "Every man is kind to a pretty girl. Don't you trust him; he will only play with you, and break your heart."

"You don't know him if you say so!" very earnestly. "He is a true and loyal gentleman. Oh, have him back! He will be the joy—the comfort of your life!"

"I'll never have him back," with a fierce light in his eyes. "He shan't come here to lay his hands on my poor savings, to cut the trees down on every side, and ruin the place where his fathers have lived for centuries. I've sworn it, and I won't break my oath. House and lands, and every coin shall go to a

stranger; and the last of the Falconers, for aught I care, may starve in a garret, or die in a gutter, but Mountfalcon shall be saved from his clutches!"

Nora gave a sigh of disappointment, then shivered involuntarily, for the wind was as cold as ice.

"Is it prudent for you to stay here?" she suggested timidly. "Your room is always so warm; the night air can't be good for you!"

"It is time for me to be gone, in more senses than one," wrapping his dressing-gown round his tall, thin figure, as he moved slowly towards the drawing-room. "My only son wants to see me in a lunatic asylum; the other boy doesn't care a hang whether I'm alive or dead. A few feet of earth is all I want." With a long-drawn breath he sank down upon the sofa, and rested his head on his hand.

Nora watched the old man in growing anxiety, and longed for Venables, who seemed as if he were never coming back. She began to fear lest he had gone with the engine, and, if so, he would not be likely to return for many hours.

Come here!" said Lord Mountfalcon, huskily.

Nora went and knelt down by his side, and he put his long lean fingers on her sunny head, staring into the pretty young face, as if he would read some secret there.

"You've played me false to day. You kept that fellow here against my orders."

"I had nothing to do with it," promptly.

"If you hadn't, Philip is a greater fool than I thought him," contemptuously. "Look at that fire, that wilful waste, and see how you cheat me behind my back?"

"I give no orders in your house!"

"Victor's wife had just such a face as yours, and Roy if he saw it would go mad about it, just as his father did about hers, but you belong to me," with a smile. "Hate them all—one and all—Philip and Roy. If I were twenty years younger, I'd marry you myself!"

She shrank away from the old man's grasp with a shudder of actual loathing, and longed frantically for Venables to come, but not a sound broke the silence in the hall.

"Kiss me, child; and let me feel that there's somebody who cares for a broken-down old man, with one foot in the grave and the other——"

The sentence died on his lips—the wish vanished from his mind, as Grimper threw open the door, and stood like one demented on the threshold.

There's a judgment on this house," she cried, all respect and decorum forgotten in her excitement. "Master Roy's out there at the fire, and he'll give his life for the useless ones, for he's the best and the noblest of them all!"

CHAPTER XXV.

"You will play with that Philip Falconer once too often, Marion! mark my words!" Lady Alice said, warningly, when the two ladies were sipping their coffee in the drawing-room, whilst Fred Sinclair was enjoying his cigar in the most luxurious armchair he could find in the dining-room. "There was a positively dangerous look in his eyes when he was talking to you!"

"And if he weren't dangerous, do you think I should care to play with him?" looking down into the fire with a sort of insolent recklessness in her beautiful eyes. "The man is ice, without a care or a thought for anyone but himself until he comes into contact with me. And it is delicious to feel that I can turn him into a volcano!"

"Volcanoes are not to my taste," said Lady Alice, shrugging her shoulders, with an expression of great disapprobation.

"You see, my dear child, you and I are about as far apart as the two poles," fanning herself languidly with a large, red, feather fan. "You look so good and sweet, you could talk any man into being a saint in half-an-hour; whilst I, if I chose to exert myself, could turn a good man into a devil in ten minutes!"

"Marion, I wish you wouldn't talk so wildly!" looking shocked.

"There's no one to listen; and I feel wild to-night, as if I expected something fearful and wonderful to happen! Philip Falconer is the most prosaic man that ever lived, and when I gave him that flower I felt as if I were applying a match to a canister of dynamite!"

"And you are not a bit ashamed of yourself?" looking round at her sister's calm face in angry surprise.

"Not in the least! You see, it can't do me any harm, because the more I see of him the less I like him."

"I tell you, you don't know what a man mayn't do if you drive him to desperation!"

"I defy him to do his worst!" said the other, proudly. "You see, these are not the days of duelling; so he can't shoot poor Honiton at twenty paces!" and she smiled, secure in the safety of her impregnable position.

Just at that very moment, when her confidence was so supreme, Mr. Sinclair came in, with a look of unusual gravity on his beardless face.

"Well, Fred, got rid of your incubus?" asked the Duchess, laughingly.

"Yes; he went off long ago. But, do you know, I've got something disagreeable to tell you?" Both ladies started up with blanched faces, fearing they scarcely knew what. "There's a good deal of smoke about the place, and we are afraid some chimney is on fire," he said, quietly. "You stay where you are, and I'll go back and investigate."

"It's the kitchen chimney," said the Duchess, as decidedly as if she knew all about it. "There's nothing to be frightened about, Alice! We have an engine of our own, and the thing will be put right in a few minutes."

"Don't come out!" said Fred, anxiously. "We are all doing our very best, and you'll only get the smoke in your eyes," pulling off his coat as he hurried out of the room. "Take care of that for love of your devoted!" he called out with a laugh, as he threw it back to Lady Alice.

"I don't think it can be much," she said, comforted by the little joke, as he had intended her to be.

"Oh, no. We've often had it happen before," replied her sister, still perfectly calm, as she went up to the bell, and rang a peal.

For the first time since she was mistress of that splendid mansion her summons was utterly disregarded, and such an unusual circumstance made her begin to feel alarmed.

"If the smoke gets into Honiton's rooms, he won't like it at all. I must see that all the doors are shut," she said, quietly, as she went out of the room.

In an instant, as soon as she stepped into the large hall she saw that there was more cause for alarm than she had supposed; and it came upon her like a shock that the whole volume of smoke came from the west wing.

"Oh, your grace! don't come here!" cried her maid, who was running about with a shawl over her head. "You'll only get all your beautiful dress dyed black!"

"As if I cared about my dress!" in supreme scorn. "Can you tell me if anyone has been to the Duke?"

"N—no!" hesitatingly.

"Then I must go at once!" turning towards the swing door resolutely.

"You can't! indeed you can't!" cried Janet, with almost a scream, placing herself before her mistress, and looking round appealingly at the other servants to come and help her.

"Nonsense; do you think I'm afraid?" her eyes flashing, her head drawn up like a queen's. "I should be a poor creature if I were afraid to go where my own husband is."

Gathering up her long trailing skirts she went towards the door and pulled it open, but as she did so she staggered back half choked, and somebody who was coming from the other side of it fell gasping at her feet.

Janet pushed the door to, or else they would all have been stifled; whilst the Duchess cried,—

"It's Mr. Sinclair! he's dying! Oh, whatever shall we do!"

With trembling hands she undid his collar, and tried to raise his head, whilst the poor boy panted, and almost fought for breath.

"Bring him to the air," said the housekeeper, hurrying up. "It's the only thing for him."

"Where is a man—a man? We can't carry him."

"All the men are with the engine, or pumping up water; but Janet, you take the young gentleman's feet. We can manage him between us."

Mrs. Goodson was a tall, fine woman, with a strong will, and as strong a pair of arms; whilst Fred was very slight, and as light as a feather.

The Duchess bent over him anxiously, holding a bottle of strong scent to his nose, entirely engrossed in trying to rouse him; but as soon as he showed the first signs of revival she remembered her husband, and a pang shot through her heart.

"Better, Fred?" she said softly, struck by the boyish beauty of his fair young face. He was so young and so slight; but he had the pluck of all the rest.

He seemed to be the only one who had thought of the poor helpless Duke, and he had nearly met his death in the attempt.

"Oh, I'm all right," giving himself a stretch, and sitting up with rather a bewildered look in his blue eyes.

Then it all flashed across him why he was there—the necessity for action, the urgent need for haste, and he scrambled to his feet.

"A ladder; we must manage it with a ladder," he said quickly; but as soon as he reached the steps, something seemed to give way in his head, and he would have fallen flat on his face if he had not been caught by Mrs. Goodson.

The Duchess gave one frightened look at him, and then rushed out on to the drive.

"A ladder—a ladder!" she cried, as loudly as she could. "Let the whole house burn, but save the Duke!"

"You see, your grace, nothing can be done till we subdue the fire!" said the steward, gravely. "No man could live in any of those rooms!"

"You tell me that, when my husband's there!" she cried in horror. "Where's Martin? Surely he'll be man enough to try!"

The steward did not answer, but pointed to the engine, round which all the men in the place were gathered.

"You see the engine's beginning to work; but there's something wrong with the hose, or we should have done it in half the time."

Oh! the precious minutes that had been wasted, whilst every sixty seconds might cost a life!

"Martin! Martin! where's Martin?" she asked of every one she came across; and at last an under-gardener answered, pointing his thumb to the smoke-encircled windows of the west wing.—

"He's 'oop there, my lady, and pretty quiet by this time, I take it!"

The Duchess staggered back as if he had struck her, an overpowering wave of remorse surging through her passionate heart, as she thought of the husband who had once been so kind to her!

Only the other day she had wished he were dead, and fretted herself nearly mad over the chain that bound them together; and now that she feared it was about to be loosed by a tragic death she felt like a murderess.

No pen could describe her helpless agony as she watched the fire gradually gaining ground, and knew that her husband and his faithful servant were almost certainly at the point of

death—"pretty quiet, by this time"—as the gardener put it so graphically.

She thought of the Duke, not as a helpless invalid, with a half-crazed mind, full of evil suspicion against herself, but as he was when he chose her for his bride—so kind—so thoughtful—so unselfish—such a strong, helpful nature—such a gentleman at heart, in spite of his unattractive exterior!

Wildly she offered large sums of money to anyone who would bring the Duke out alive; but no one seemed inclined to risk his life in order to save a master who was no good to himself or to anyone else.

They could not understand the Duchess's extreme anxiety, as his death would set her free from a tie which it had often been whispered that she hated; and there was not a man amongst them who did not feel that he was more of a man than the poor, helpless Duke.

Most of them were new servants, and there was no trace of the old feudal affection that used to exist between a nobleman and his retainers. They were ready enough to pull out the pictures and other valuables that they could reach without absolute danger; but as to venturing beyond, into the gulf of smoke and flame, it would be sheer throwing away of valuable lives to save a useless one.

The Duchess ran backwards and forwards like one distraught, wringing her hands, and calling for some one to help.

She felt that she could not bear the strain much longer, her brain *must* turn. Oh! for a man worthy of the name, instead of these selfish cowards!

As if in answer to her prayer, a dog-cart dashed up to the door, and Roy Falconer sprang out of it, followed by the Earl of Clavering.

"Oh, Roy! she cried, with almost a sob of joy. "You can help me. I know you can!"

"What is it?" looking down into her agitated face with the utmost concern on his own. "There's nobody in danger, surely—everyone's got out?"

"No! he's there—Honiton; and they are all afraid to go to him!"

He ran his eye over the broad facade of the west wing, and shook his head.

"We must try the other side. I daresay I can manage it. Give me a ladder and a blanket, or something to keep out the smoke."

The ladder was carried round to the front by many willing hands.

"Haven't you a fire-escape?" asked the Earl, anxiously. "The idea of a house like this without one!"

"Honiton was always talking about it."

"We came as soon as we could; but I wish we had been sooner," he said, regretfully.

Roy had no time to talk. He was putting the rug which had been brought him over his head, and the Duchess went to his assistance, fastening it so that the smallest aperture was left for his eyes.

With these he could see she was blue with cold—nearly frozen by the bitter wind, which was blowing over her neck and arms, for she was still in her evening dress, and without a wrap.

She wondered at herself afterwards how she could send Roy Falconer to what might be his death, without a thought of the danger for him.

"Wrap my ulster round the Duchess," he called out to the Earl, who was standing at the foot of the ladder.

"I can't—I'm coming too!"

"Not you—for Heaven's sake, stay where you are. I'm a single man!"

"He's quite right," said Marion, as she thought of the happy home at the Chase. "Think of your wife and child!"

"Neither of them would wish me to be a coward!"

At that moment there was a shout, as the engine from Mountfalcon drove up, the horses smoking as if they had come at their fastest pace.

Lord Clavering could not stir either to go up the ladder or to go away from it, as there was no one else to hold it; but he asked the Duchess to tell them to bring the engine round to that side directly. She hurried up to Andrewes, holding Roy's ulster over her shivering shoulders.

He blinked his eyes in the glare from the flames, still more dazzled by the beautiful vision before him.

It was years since he had seen a high-born lady like this, with the long, trailing skirts of silk and lace, and the diamonds shining in her dusky hair.

The sight dazed him so, that he could scarcely get out the question which was occupying almost all the space of his mind.

"Is it true, my lady, that the Captain's here?" he asked, eagerly.

There was only one Captain in the world to those at Mountfalcon.

"Yes; he's up there," looking towards the burning building. "He was braver than anybody else," her lovely lips trembling, "so he has gone to save the Duke!"

"Then, I'm thinking, I'll be up there, too. Come along, my lads. Bring the engine along. Lay to with a will—there's the hope of Mountfalcon a-risking of his precious life, and we've got to get him out."

"Here, my good fellow! you hold the ladder. I want to go up it!" said the Earl, eagerly.

"No, my lord! You see that they works the hose properly. This is my business. I could never show my face if anything happened to the young master." And pushing the Earl on one side, the coachman began to climb up towards the nearest window.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The moments of dull waiting were almost the hardest of all; and Lady Alice held her sister's hand tightly in her own, knowing what she must be suffering.

The Duchess stood like a statue of despair; not a shade of colour in her cheeks; her red lips pressed together, her eyes fixed on the west wing.

Burning fragments, blown off by the wind, kept falling round her, but she would not move.

It seemed as if her whole life were bound up in the issue of the next few minutes.

A sudden idea struck the Earl.

"Isn't there a door from the gallery into this part of the house?"

"Yes; but it was locked by Honiton's orders, and the key lost—I don't know how."

"Can't it be smashed in?"

"Yes, certainly; only they said that opening it would make the draught worse!"

"It will do that. But your object is to save your husband, not the house."

"I don't care what becomes of anything else!"

"Here! somebody bring a pickaxe, or anything that's handy, and follow me!"

Several men came with any tools they could get hold of, and the Earl having hurried through the hall and up the broad staircase, caught the pickaxe out of the gardener's hands, and levelled a tremendous blow at the solid oaken door.

The wood of one of the panels splintered into a thousand fragments, and a small hole was made through which the smoke poured as through a safety valve, but the hinges stood firm.

Several frightened maids stood watching breathlessly, with bundles of their most precious goods in their hands, ready to scream and run away at the first opportunity.

"Go back!" said Lord Clavering, "and get as many water-jugs as you can."

They ran off to do his bidding.

"Now," he said to the men, "let us take it with a rush."

With tremendous force they threw themselves against the woodwork, and one hinge gave way.

They took a deep breath, and went at it again, when the last hinge came away from its framework, and they all fell forward on their faces as the door came open suddenly.

As soon as Lord Clavering got his voice, he called for the water, but the maids had run back helter-skelter, screaming like a flock of geese, as soon as they felt the warm smoke in their faces.

However, he caught up a jug of water, and dashed it against the first burning thing he could see, which was the wooden framework of a bedroom door.

The smoke, released from its long imprisonment, was circulating freely through the whole length of the gallery, so he sent back one of the men to close all the doors, and diminish the draught as much as possible.

They had to advance cautiously, throwing water before them on the carpets, and tearing down every curtain they came across.

The smoke was, of course, blinding and suffocating, and every now and then one succumbed, and had to go back to get a breath of fresher air.

Lady Alice and the Duchess had come up from the garden, for any escape from that side was perfectly hopeless by this time; and even Andrewes had been baffled.

Alice saw that the best thing she could do was to work the handle of the pump in a housemaid's closet.

She pumped the water into cans and jugs, the maids passing them on to the Duchess and the housekeeper.

Outside they could hear the hissing of water on the flames on every side, for engines had arrived from every village, near or far, that possessed one.

But there was no other sound in the corridor, except the crackling of wood.

Marion listened with ears that ached for the sound of a human voice.

Her mind seemed dazed. This burning house, this splashing of water, seemed like parts of a nightmare.

The Earl's figure suddenly loomed before her, looking oddly large in the smoke.

"We can go no further. There's no one in any of these rooms," he said, gruffly.

"Go on; his is round the corner!" she whispered hoarsely.

"The floor's fallen in!"

"Oh—Heaven, have mercy!" hiding her face in her hands.

"Does the wall of this last room touch his?"

"Yes, I think so," trying hard to recollect.

"Then we must try and knock it down. But you go back; neither floor nor ceiling are safe for a moment longer."

"Come back my lady!" implored the housekeeper.

"Water, water, some more water!" cried the Duchess, her eyes shining with renewed hope.

The maids helped, but they were afraid to come so far into the heart of the fire, as it were, and they kept imploring their mistress to come back.

She ran to the door of the last room, next to her husband's—a heavy jug, full to the brim, in her hands.

The smoke was so dense that she knocked up against the table without seeing it, and some of the water was spilt.

"Keep the floor damp if you can," said the Earl's voice out of the darkness, "and some of you go back. It won't bear us all."

"Here," cried Marion, advancing bravely, and emptying her jug at his feet.

"Clavering, is that you?"

Oh, heavens! It was a voice from the other side of the wall—a voice weak, exhausted, and utterly unrecognisable, but it must be Roy Falconer's!

"Yes, my boy, we are here! Hold on for a minute," cried Lord Clavering, joyously.

"The roof's on the point of falling," cried Andrewes, rushing in and brandishing a heavy

mallet. "Down with the wall—it's now or never!"

"All out of the room, except the two of us," cried the Earl; and, in a lower voice, "We shall bring the ceiling atop of us to a dead certainty, and the floor will be in directly."

All retreated except the Duchess, who stood in the doorway, perfectly reckless of the danger to herself, as she made frantic signs to the others to bring more water.

Although the two who were hewing and hacking at the wall were only a few yards from her, she could see nothing of them.

"Come away, my lady, the floor's giving way under our very feet!" cried the faithful housekeeper, who could not bear to desert her mistress, and yet felt unwilling to throw away her own life for nothing.

Hark! A loud crash, when everything seemed giving way above and below, and flames shot up from down below, and tongues of fire came from up above! There was a shout, a rush, a scramble. Somebody caught hold of the Duchess and dragged her along. She was gasping for breath, and nearly past all consciousness; but when she recovered she was in her own boudoir beside an open window.

"What has happened?" she asked, looking up into her sister's anxious face.

"Oh, dear! I thought you were dead!" and Lady Alice, utterly unstrung, burst into tears.

The Duchess remembered the next moment, and, afraid to ask a question, pushed her way past all the maids in the room and went out on to the gallery. Here there was a group round "something" lying down on the floor.

"Stand back!" said Dr. Adair, who had just come up to see if he were wanted. "I think he is alive, but he must have as much air as he can."

She looked from one to the other. Fred was there—but not Lord Clavering nor Andrewes—the two who had worked so hard to effect a rescue. She clasped her hands against her heart. Which was it that was saved? *Which did she wish it to be*—her husband or Roy?

Deathly white, she made her way to the centre of the group, and saw the homely features of the Duke! She dropped on her knees, shaking from head to foot, not knowing if her prayers had been answered or not.

Fred Sinclair dared not speak, but he laid his hand caressingly on her shoulder. There was an awful, breathless silence, and then a deep-drawn breath, a moving of the heavy eyelids—actually—was it possible?—a half smile on the pale lips! She bent forward, a whole fount of womanly tenderness in her beautiful eyes.

"Marion!" he said, hoarsely, but with a look of unutterable love in his eyes, such as they had never worn since half his senses had been paralysed. A shower of tears ran down on his face, as the wife, who had wished him dead a few days before, now cried with joy to find he was alive!

"Be careful. No emotion. The slightest excitement may be fatal," said the doctor in a whisper.

"What is it all about?" asked the Duke, speaking with some difficulty. "I seem all in a fog—have I been ill?" raising himself on his right arm.

"Yes, dear!" said the Duchess, trying to steady her voice. "You have been very ill, but you will be better now."

"Come, let us get him out of this smoke," said the doctor. "I'm afraid, Mr. Sinclair, you can't help me to carry his Grace?"

"Carry me? Why, bless your heart, it would take a dozen to lift me. Why shouldn't I walk?" So saying, to the amazement of all, he laid hold of the doctor's arm, and leaning on it heavily, first rested on his knees, and then stood upright!

The Duchess clasped her hands, the tears running down her cheeks.

"Oh, where's Captain Falconer?" she said, huskily, "that I may thank him from the bottom of my heart? He has given me back my husband in more ways than one!"

Fred and Alice had vanished, so no one answered the question; but the housekeeper said hastily,—

"Will you like to take his Grace to your boudoir for the present; the rest of the place being so upset?"

"Yes, come, Honiton," giving him her arm with a fond smile. "You haven't been there for ages."

The Duke smiled, as, supported on either side, he made his way to the further end of the gallery.

"I'm as black as a tinker—and—and—what on earth have I got round me!" looking down. "The place is full of smoke. Is the house on fire?"

"Yes, dear."

"Then *I* ought to make myself useful," stopping short to regain his breath, whilst large beads gathered on his forehead. "I mustn't leave all the work to others."

"You must rest first," said the doctor, with a smile, "or you will make too much work for me. I don't think a little brandy would do you any harm!"

"I'll go and fetch it," said Mrs. Goodson, but the doctor followed her, and the husband and wife were left side by side on the large comfortable sofa—feeling as if they had been parted for years.

"My love!" he said, as he leant his head wearily on the cushions, "don't you think it would be a good thing to get Martin, *or* somebody who could spare a moment, just to light the fire again? It's you I'm thinking of, not myself. You are absolutely shaking."

Her face changed, but he could not see it, for, in the hurry and confusion, the lamps had been allowed to go out, and they were sitting by the light of one tall wax candle.

Martin, where was he? Hadn't that wretched gardener said he was quiet enough now? And she hadn't thought of him once—poor, faithful fellow! The tears sprang to her eyes. Why did no one come near them? Had Roy gone home—afraid of being thanked? It was just like him. So brave, so generous, never claiming anything for himself!

"What are you thinking of?" her husband asked, after the silence had lasted some time. "I hope no one has come to grief to-night?"

"You were nearly coming to grief, only Captain Falconer risked his life to save you. Lord Clavering helped, but he was the one who went up the ladder, when all the men were afraid," a sob in her throat as she thought of her remembered anguish.

"I always liked Falconer. I'm sure I wish I could do something for him. To think he should have saved me without my knowing a bit about it. I wonder he took the trouble," leaning back and closing his eyes, for he was utterly exhausted.

"Shall I ask him to come and shake hands?"

"Yes. I should like—" the rest was lost, as the Duke fell asleep, the velvet curtain still wrapped round him.

The Duchess stole softly from the room, and looked round the deserted gallery with frightened eyes. There was still the noise of a crowd outside, and the splashing of water on heated embers; but the fire had evidently been got under, and apparently there was no more danger to be feared.

The atmosphere was still very smoky and unpleasant, and the wind was blowing in unchecked through the blackened aperture, where the door formerly stood which led into the west wing.

Where were all the others? Why didn't they come to congratulate her on the marvellous recovery of the Duke. It was so strange and unsympathetic of them, unless something awful had happened.

Slowly, very slowly, she went down the broad staircase; the gilding of the banisters was completely blackened, the handsome Turkish carpeting irretrievably damaged; but she saw nothing of it, for her eyes were fixed with a stare of endless horror on a low divan, on which a form was lying, covered from head to foot with a black shawl.

The wind, from the open doorway, raised the corner of the black covering, and flapped it backwards and forwards; but there was no movement underneath it!

CHAPTER XXVII.

Roy Falconer had made his way with immense difficulty to the Duke's bedroom, and found him just roused from his sleep, and dreamily asking what was the matter.

He pulled him out of bed, wrapped a blanket round him, and propped him up on a chair. The Duke immediately collapsed, and became perfectly incapable of any movement.

He doubted if he ought to risk the Duke's life by an attempt—which might prove futile—to save Martin, and yet he could not leave him to his fate.

Probably the valet was no longer there, for it did not seem likely that he would stay quietly to be burnt in his bed. It was possible that he might have jumped up at the first alarm of the fire, and gone to seek help, knowing that he could not save his master without further assistance; but if so, why was he nowhere to be seen?

Roy opened his door, and found the room one mass of smoke. No one could breathe in such an atmosphere, and he discovered the poor fellow quite dead, lying just the other side of the door, as if he had been struck down on his way to his master.

It was clear that the fire had originated either in Martin's room or somewhere very near it, for the flames were already devouring the outer wall.

He hastened back and opened the door on to the landing, only to shut it again as quickly as he could. Instead of the landing there was an open space, filled with smoke and flames. He went towards the window and found the boards giving way beneath his feet!

They were caught in a trap from which there was no escape, and the fire was gaining ground with rapid strides.

If he had had only himself to think of he thought he could have managed it, but if he left the Duke he would certainly be burnt where he sat.

His eyes roamed round the room with its handsome furniture all ready to be made a bonfire of. What a pity it all seemed! He pulled down the velvet curtain over the door, and wrapped it round the Duke, then took another for himself from the bed.

"We may as well die decently, like Cæsar," he said to himself with a smile; "and ordinary clothing soon vanishes in a fire."

There was a water-jug, besides a large can of water, ready for the Duke's bath. He took them both, and soaked the flooring in a semi-circle round the chair on which the Duke was half sitting, half lying. Then he went and stood by him, supporting his heavy head against his side, and wondering how many people would miss them both when they were gone.

This was a different ending to his life to any he had pictured—dying like a rat in a hole!

When love failed him so cruelly, he had meant a soldier's ambition to be his consolation.

Death lost all its terrors if it would but come when he was fighting at the head of his brave troopers, with the shouts of victory in his failing ears.

He would have started for India long ago, only something held him back.

Could it be the remembrance of a sweet little face, framed in gold-brown hair—could it be a pair of violet eyes which had kept him in England almost against his will?

"Ah! poor child!" he said to himself regretfully, "there will be nothing to save her now from the scoundrel's snare!"

(To be continued.)

A DIFFERENCE IN GOOD-BYES.

—o—

"All his careless good-byes have been spoken,
Unheeding he goes on his way:
While my eyes are all heavy with weeping,
For the love that I dare not betray.

"Oh! why did he treat me so kindly,
Till I lived in the light of his smile?
By the love that I read in his glances,
Did he only intend to beguile?

"I thought he would surely have spoken
One word for my hearing alone;
If e'er he returns I will greet him
With a manner as cool as his own."

She hears not a footstep approaching,
Till a face bends so close at her side,
That vain is all maidenly effort
Her tear-bedimmed visage to hide.

"Why, Richard, not gone yet?" she falters,
"I supposed you were well on your way;
I fear, if you tarry much longer,
You will miss the best part of the day."

"Not gone yet, indeed, I assure you;
Let me kiss that big tear from your eye.
Did you think I could go without coming
To bid my sweet Katie good-bye?"

He is gone; but I still feel his kisses,
On my lips, and my cheeks, and my eyes,
Which no longer are heavy with weeping—
What a difference there is in good-byes!

H. A. C.

CINDERELLA'S MARRIAGE.

—:o:—

CHAPTER IV.

LUCINDA'S NEW HOME.

Thornleigh Castle was very old, very irregular, very picturesque. Its grounds were extensive—but not so extensive as they had once been—and sloped down to the sea on the one side, while on the other, they stretched inland in sunny uplands, backed by the shadow of woods, which in spring were very Paradises to children in search of primroses and violets.

When Lucinda saw the Castle for the first time, she broke into a little cry of unalloyed delight, for her eyes had never before rested on one of the "stately homes of England," and she was artist enough to give it its full due of admiration.

The Earl, who was with her, looked pleased, for he was very proud of his beautiful home, but he sighed directly afterwards. The recollection of mortgages, and various other encumbrances on the estate, was not a very pleasant one.

He was by no means a rich man, comparatively speaking, and yet he found it incumbent on him to keep up an appearance and an establishment that would not have disgraced a millionaire.

Lady Christabel was not at home when they arrived, and Lord Thornleigh explained to Lucinda that she was abroad with some friends, and not expected to return for another week or two.

The young girl found that a suite of pretty rooms had been prepared for her, and for her pupil, and every effort seemed to have been made for her comfort.

"I hope," said the Earl, "that you will be very happy here, and make yourself quite at home; you are at liberty to go anywhere about the grounds, and there is no necessity that you should have Mona with you after lesson hours unless you like. Her French nurse is very devoted to her, and will always be glad to relieve you."

Mona, was a fair-haired, high-spirited, mischievous child, quite capable of giving her governess infinite trouble if she were so minded. Luckily, however, she had taken a fancy to Lucinda, and therefore the girl had a good deal of influence over her, and speedily grew very fond of her.

For the first week, life at the Castle was quiet, but Lucinda did not find it by any means monotonous. She was never tired of wandering through the dim old picture-gallery, with its rich stained-glass windows, and gazing at the dead and gone Thornleighs, whose portraits filled it.

This new existence was a complete revelation to her, brought up as she had been, and she enjoyed it to the full.

In the picture-gallery was an organ, and upon this the young girl—having received permission from the Earl—was very fond of playing. She was seated at it one evening between the lights, playing soft melodies over to herself so long as daylight lasted; and when it grew too dusk to see the notes, letting her hands fall idly on her lap, while her thoughts drifted into a sort of day-dream.

She wondered where Bertie was at the present moment, whether he ever thought of the river waif whose life he had saved, and what he would say to her when they met for the first time after all these years.

Suddenly she was roused from her reverie, by the startling consciousness that she was not alone. Before she *saw*, she *felt* that something or someone was near her. She looked up quickly.

The shadows of dusk filled the gallery, which was always, by reason of its stained-glass windows, darker than any other place, and a few paces from her there stood, in the half-light, a lady clothed in some neutral-tinted garment, that could hardly be distinguished from the grey atmosphere surrounding her.

What she was like—whether dark or fair, young or old—it was impossible to say, for the outlines of her figure seemed to melt imperceptibly into the dusk; but that she was a visible entity, and not a delusion of the senses, Lucinda felt perfectly convinced.

Involuntarily, the girl—though she was by no means timid as a rule—shivered. She was conscious of a weird sort of impression that she was in the presence of the supernatural. The stillness of the hour, the grey dusk, the silent way in which the apparition had appeared, all helped to produce an uncanny effect.

But in spite of this Lucinda was brave enough, and after the first shock of surprise had worn off she exclaimed, boldly,—

"Who are you? What do you want?"

Her own voice dissolved the spell, and finding no answer came she dashed forward.

In so doing her foot caught in one of the rugs that lay on the floor, and she was thrown down. When she got up again, the lady had vanished.

Lucinda was stupified, for a little farther along, the gallery ended, and there was no exit, so that in order to get away the lady would have been compelled to pass her; and this Lucinda was certain she had not done. How, then, had she made her escape?

Lucinda's first idea was to go and tell the Earl of this singular episode, but second thoughts counselled her to seek the housekeeper instead, as Lord Thornleigh might resent being disturbed on such a matter.

Accordingly she went to the cosy little room which was the sanctum of Mrs. Lipton, and there found the housekeeper knitting by the light of a shaded reading-lamp.

She was a good-natured, portly old body, who always wore a rustling, black silk dress, and a cap amply garnished with white satin ribbons.

She had been in the Earl's service for so many years, that she regarded herself as quite one of the family.

"Well, my dear!" she said, cheerily, as the young governess entered. Then, catching sight of her face, she added, in a different tone "Good gracious! Miss Richmond. How white you look! What's the matter?"

"Something so strange that perhaps you will hardly believe it when I tell it you," responded the young girl, gravely; and then she related what had happened in the gallery.

She was quite prepared to hear Mrs. Lipton make fun of her story, and treat it as an hallucination rather than a fact; but, somewhat to her surprise, the housekeeper grew very pale, and as the narrator finished, she wrung her plump hands together in a sudden access of distress.

"Some new trouble for the Earl," she muttered, more to herself than her companion. "I wonder what it is this time?"

"Then you can explain this strange circumstance, Mrs. Lipton?" said Lucinda, who had been watching her with quiet intentness.

"No, my dear, I can't. It's just one of those things that neither I nor yet the cleverest man in all the world can unravel. It's a mystery, that's what it is—neither more nor less."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you've seen the Grey Lady of Thornleigh! But more than that I can hardly tell you, except that she never appears, but to foretell some great misfortune to the family."

"Is she a *spirit*, then?" inquired the girl, her voice dropping to a low, awed whisper.

"I have told you all I know," the housekeeper returned, rather doggedly, "and I'm not in a position to say more. What she is you ought to be able to say better than I, for you have seen her, and I haven't."

"But other people besides myself have seen her too?"

"Oh, yes! One or two of the servants have, and nice frights they got into over it. Why, one housemaid went into hysterics, and ramped and raved for half the night, as if the Grey Lady would have condescended to do *her* any harm!" Mrs. Lipton said, with supreme scorn. Then, finding that Lucinda was still looking at her in a questioning manner, she added, "I suppose if the Thornleighs were an Irish family the Grey Lady would be called a Banshee—it amounts to much the same thing!"

Lucinda still looked mystified, as well as curious.

"What is the origin of the story?" she asked, after a few minutes' pause, during which the housekeeper had been sorrowfully regarding her mittened hands as they lay crossed on her lap.

"Well," Mrs. Lipton replied, slowly, "people say—but *I* don't profess any belief one way or the other—that this Grey Lady was the wife of one of the Earls of Thornleigh in the reign of George the Second, and that he behaved very badly to her, and finally killed her at last by his unkindness. The story goes, that in her dying moments the lady said she foresaw that every male of the family was destined to come to a violent death, and she herself would announce it to them beforehand, as well as any great calamity that might threaten them."

"And *have* the Earls died a violent death?" breathed Lucinda.

The housekeeper nodded sombrely.

"So far, the prophecy has come true. One Earl was thrown from his horse, another died in the wars, a third was killed in a duel, and the last—well, I can't exactly say how *he* met his end; but I know for certain that he did not die quietly in his bed, like an ordinary Christian man. But, for goodness sake!" she added, earnestly laying her hand on that of the governess, "don't breathe a word of this to anybody! My lord would be in a dreadful state of mind if he heard of it!"

"Then it's a good thing that I did not go to him in the first instance?"

"Indeed it is. You were very wise to come to me. It is a pleasure," continued Mrs. Lipton, approvingly. "It is a *great* pleasure to find a young person of your age possessed of so much common sense. You had better stay

the evening, and have supper with me, will you?"

Lucinda declined at first, but finding that Mrs. Lipton was rather offended by her refusal she finally accepted the invitation, and was rewarded by hearing a goodly amount of gossip concerning the Thornleighs.

"Such a pity my lord has no son!" the housekeeper said, in a tone that showed she looked upon the omission as a personal grievance. "At his death, the title will go to a distant relation whom he has never seen, and the estates with it."

"Then won't Lady Christabel have the estates?" asked Lucinda, whose ideas of law were hazy in the extreme.

"Lady Christabel! No, she won't have anything but the little ready-money her father may be able to leave her. Still, that doesn't matter much, for she's beautiful enough to marry a royal prince, and the lack of dowry won't make much difference to *her*, at least it *ought* not to. But these are such mercenary days," said the good housekeeper, sighing dolefully; "and it seems to me that men don't marry for love as they used to, but for money, which is a very unsatisfactory thing after all."

"I suppose," Lucinda said, tentatively, "Lady Christabel has lots of admirers?"

"I should think she had! It is over three years now since she was presented at Court, and since then she has had at least a dozen good offers of marriage to my knowledge; and I daresay she has had as many more that I know nothing about. But she has refused them all."

"And is not engaged?"

"And is not engaged!"

"How is that, I wonder?"

The housekeeper blinked her eyes—an action that gave her a ludicrous resemblance to a solemn old owl.

"I expect," she observed, sagaciously, "the reason is, that she is in love with one particular young man, and that particular young man can't afford to marry such a beautiful and extravagant wife; for Lady Christabel is just as extravagant as ever she can be."

"Doesn't this young man care for her, then?" inquired Lucinda, who took all a young girl's vivid interest in a love-story.

"*Care* for her? Why, he worships the very ground she treads on! It's easy enough for anyone to see that, with only half an eye! But the Earl objects, and Lady Christabel herself would think twice before she married ——"

The housekeeper pulled herself up sharply, and seemed a little ashamed of her indiscretion.

"How my tongue does run away with me, to be sure!" she said, and, very adroitly, she managed to change the subject.

If she had completed her sentence what a difference it would have made to Lucinda's future life!

CHAPTER V

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

After that Lucinda was rather careful to avoid the picture gallery when it grew dusk—and, indeed, she did not relish being there alone in the daytime either.

So far from reassuring her, the housekeeper's story had confirmed the superstitious terror that had come upon her at the sight of the Grey Lady; and now, although she was ashamed of her credulity, she could not quite reason herself out of a belief in the supernatural character of the apparition.

During the last week in August, the domestics at the Castle began to be very busy, preparing for the guests that were to make up for my lord's shooting party on the First of September.

Mrs. Lipton was to be seen bustling about, her silk dress tucked up, and guarded by a snowy-white apron, and her cap protected by a clean duster, thrown cornerwise over it.

Lady Christabel was also expected home, and our little heroine found herself looking forward to the young lady's appearance, with a vivid feeling of pleasurable excitement, for which she would have found it difficult to account.

Two days before Lady Christabel was to arrive Lucinda walked to the neighbouring village of Reefham.

She had found herself destitute of foreign writing-paper; and as she wanted to reply to a letter of Miss Stewart's, she undertook the walk in the hope of getting some at one of the village shops.

But foreign writing-paper seemed to be a quite unknown commodity in Reefham; and finally the young girl turned her steps homewards without having got what she wanted.

By this time it was six o'clock, and as she had some seven miles to walk, she set off at a pretty good pace.

The evening was hot and close, and still, with that ominous stillness, that falls upon Nature when a thunderstorm is threatening. Not a bird twittered in the branches, not a twig or leaf moved.

The air was laden with a sort of breathless expectancy, while the clouds brooded sullenly above the parched earth.

When Lucinda had accomplished about half the distance the storm broke.

Great torrents of rain rushed down, as if the flood-gates of Heaven were loosened, and another deluge was imminent.

Then a long, blinding, quivering flash of light struck across the sky, and was followed by a mighty crash, like the din of armies meeting for the first time.

Lucinda ran to the first tree, and took shelter beneath it, while the storm raged on with unabated violence.

Flash after flash of lightning came, and was followed by those awful crashes of thunder.

Then a terrible thing happened.

A tree on the opposite side of the road was struck by the lightning; and Lucinda, in a sudden access of fear, ran from under her own shelter, fearing lest that, too, might be struck.

Almost at the same time there came the sound of approaching wheels, but she was too terrified to notice it, and stood stock-still in the middle of the road, not knowing whether to run on towards the Castle, or to turn back to Reefham, and stay there till the storm was over.

The wheels belonged to a dog-cart, which a young man was driving, but the rain was dashing into his face with such blinding force that it was quite natural he should miss seeing the slender figure of the young girl until he came within a few paces of it. Then he pulled the horse up so sharply that the animal swerved violently to one side; the wheel of the dog-cart caught on a heap of stones with which the road was being mended, and in another second the driver was thrown out to some distance.

As she saw the accident Lucinda recovered her self-possession, and at once ran to the young man's side.

"Oh, I am so very sorry!" she exclaimed, kneeling down on the wet grass. "I hope you are not hurt?"

At the sound of her voice he partially raised himself, and a great shock of delight ran like a sudden wave of quicksilver through the young girl's veins. For this was none other than Bertie Carbonnell.

She recognised him in a moment—and, indeed, he was very little changed from the bright-haired, blue-eyed young soldier who had brought her to life on that May evening two years and-a-half ago.

But his eyes fell on her with no answering gleam of recognition. He saw a beautiful, delicate-faced girl, with great starry grey eyes, and small refined features, dressed simply and elegantly, in a tailor-made costume of grey cloth, that fitted her supple figure to perfection.

That this lovely creature could be the pale, angular, pinched-looking child whose life he had saved was the very last thing likely to strike him.

"Thank you, I'm not much hurt," he said; "at least I think not," he added, less positively, as he attempted to rise, and found the task was one of some difficulty.

As a matter of fact, he had sprained his ankle, and but for the timely assistance of Lucinda's arm, he would not have been able to stand at all.

"Lean on me," she said, in a low voice, that was trembling with excitement. "You need not be afraid—I am stronger than I look!"

He smiled, and accepted the offered aid.

"After all," he said, "it is lucky for me it is no worse than a sprained foot. If I had happened to fall on that heap of stones, instead of on the green sward, I should not have come off so well."

"And I am to blame for your accident!"

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed, laughing, "the fault was mine. I ought to have seen you, and pulled up in time. However, we will not discuss the question. If you will be good enough to help me, I will see what damage is done to the horse and cart."

Lucinda's heart was beating in such great, excited throbs that it seemed to her he must surely hear them. She did not speak, because she felt, that just at this moment, it would have been utterly impossible to control her voice.

Bertie's anxiety about the horse was soon allayed, for the animal seemed to be unhurt, and the dog-cart had only sustained trifling injuries.

Just then the storm cleared off as suddenly as it had commenced; the thunder rolled away, and could only be heard muttering in low reverberations amongst the distant hills, and the rain ceased altogether. Bertie withdrew his arm from that of his companion, and supported himself by leaning on the shaft of the dog-cart.

"I owe you a deep debt of gratitude for your assistance!" he said, with a courteous bow. "Will you let me attempt to pay it by driving you home? The roads are much too muddy for you to walk over so short a distance. May I ask where is your destination?"

"Thornleigh Castle."

He looked surprised.

"I thought," he said, "Lady Christabel had not come home yet, and that no visitors were to arrive until after her return?"

"That is very likely; but as, it happens, I am not a visitor," the girl replied, dimpling into a deliciously roguish smile. "I am only the governess!"

"The governess!" he repeated, puzzled, and looking at her very much as if he doubted the truth of the assertion. "I was not aware there was a governess at the Castle!"

"Then, surely, you have something to learn; and not only can I instruct you in that respect, but in another as well."

He seemed amused by her audacity, and bowed again, while his blue eyes told her in unmistakable language, that he thought her very charming.

"I cannot regret my ignorance if it is to be instructed in so delightful a fashion!" he said, with the gay assurance that became him so well. "Will you please begin your lesson at once?"

"In the first place," said Lucinda, blushing a lovely rose-red, "and before I tell you who I am, I must call you to account for not having recognised me."

Bertie raised his eyebrows in mild expostulation.

"But, my dear young lady, I cannot plead guilty to *that* indictment, because I am perfectly sure that I am innocent. Believe me, if I *had* seen you before I should not have forgotten you. Yours is not a face to fade from a man's memory."

"And yet it has entirely faded from yours!" she exclaimed, with a touch of sadness in her voice. "Look at me again, Captain Carbonnell, and see if you can't recall when you

saw me first! It was a memorable occasion to me."

The officer obeyed, and scanned each feature of the fair flushed face. As his eyes met hers in one long gaze he seemed to waver for the first time.

"There is something in your eyes that is familiar to me," he said, rather uneasily. "Yes, you are right. We have met before, but where I cannot say!"

"Shall I refresh your memory? Shall I recall to you a spring night by the river—a wretched child whom you dragged from the water, and afterwards——"

Her voice broke down, and he seized both her hands in his with a little cry of amazement.

"It is impossible. You are not Lucinda!"

"Indeed but I am!"

He looked at her again, long and earnestly, still holding her hands.

"I can hardly believe it—you the little, wan, pinched-faced child! Why, you are a veritable Cinderella! You have blossomed out into a beautiful Princess!"

"Have I?" she cried, with a certain eager, childish naïveté that clung to her. "Do you really think I have grown pretty?"

There was no vanity in the question. If she were indeed beautiful, it was only for his sake that she would glory in her beauty.

"Indeed I do; but I will not flatter you by dwelling on the change these few years have wrought in you. I am more than anxious to know what brings you here in such an unexpected manner."

In a few words she told him; and although, if Bertie had been consulted in the first place, he would probably have objected to his *protégée* being converted into a member of Lord Thornleigh's household, yet, under the circumstances, he could not say that he was sorry she had left Brussels for the Castle. Besides, Lucinda looked up at him with such an eager delight in the fact of her emancipation that he smiled down into her sweet eyes, and assured her that if she was happy, he was satisfied.

"And now, my little Cinderella," he said, "let us get into the cart, and I will drive you back to the Castle. Lord Thornleigh will be surprised to see me, for he did not expect me until to-morrow; but I found myself in England a day sooner than I intended, and as there was no one in town I determined to push on. One needn't stand on ceremony with one's relations, you know."

The drive back was very delightful, and if Bertie suffered any pain from his sprained foot he was careful to conceal it. There was no lack of subjects of conversation between them; the young man wanted to hear all details of Lucinda's school life, and she found herself talking to him, with a perfectly spontaneous freedom that showed her at her best.

Every now and then he stole a glance at her—at the rose-flushed face and the glowing eyes—and he confessed to himself that many a royal princess might envy the grace and beauty with which nature had dowered this friendless girl.

"And now," she said, presently, "tell me something of what *you* have been doing since we last met?"

His face crimsoned, and he shifted his gaze uneasily. The history of these two years and a-half was not one that he could look back upon with unalloyed pleasure. He had been reckless and extravagant; he had gambled, he had betted—not so much because he was at heart either a gambler, or a spendthrift, but because he wanted to drown a haunting sorrow—a constant regret.

"Oh!" he said, "I have been knocking about the world, doing for the most part those things that I ought not to do, and leaving undone those things that I ought to have done. My time has not been spent so profitably as yours."

"I don't believe *that!*" she asseverated, stoutly.

"Don't you? And why not, pray?"

"Because I judge you from my own experience, and I think it is much more likely that you have a long list of kind and noble actions to look back upon, only you are too generous to acknowledge them."

Bertie smiled rather bitterly. And yet this innocent faith of hers pleased him. It was very delightful to think that *one* person, at least, believed in him as the perfection of noble chivalry. No man is ever quite inaccessible to a pretty woman's flattery!

"Keep your good opinion of me as long as you can, little Cinderella!" he said, softly, "Even if I do not deserve it, I am glad to think it is there."

CHAPTER VI.

LADY CHRISTABEL IS CANDID.

On entering the Castle, Lucinda was struck by the unwonted air of bustle that prevailed, forming as it did such a great contrast to its usual serenity. The reason of this was soon explained. Lady Christabel had come back as unexpectedly as Captain Carbonnell, and the servants were not slow to see something more than an accident in the coincidence of their simultaneous arrival.

No one noticed the governess, who slipped quietly upstairs to her own room, and then sat down, and remained for about an hour, lost in a dream of happiness, from which she was aroused by the sound of the dinner-gong. Not that the dinner-gong had any special significance so far as she was concerned, for she and her pupil dined together in their own apartments in the middle of the day; but on this particular evening Lucinda knew that by peeping through the banisters she might have a chance of seeing Bertie go from the drawing-room to the dining-room, and she could not resist the temptation!

How handsome he looked in his irreproachable evening dress, with a tuberose in his buttonhole!

He had given his arm to Lady Christabel—a dazzling vision in pale green and silver brocade, with a long spray of yellow roses nestling in her corsage, and diamond stars flashing amid the thick coils of her golden hair.

Lucinda was conscious of a strange constriction of the heart as she watched the two; but it passed directly, and she said to herself,—

"They are cousins; no doubt they are fond of each other."

That they were fond of each other, no one who saw them together could doubt.

During dinner Carbonnell hardly once took his eyes off his cousin, and made no sort of effort to conceal his passionate admiration.

On her part, Lady Christabel accepted his homage much as a queen may accept the homage of her subjects—as her rightful due; nevertheless, every now and again, her gaze would rest furtively on his face with a sort of half-regretful fondness, that seemed to say she was far from being as indifferent to him as she wished the world to suppose.

Soon after, she left the gentlemen to their wine and cigars, Lord Thornleigh was called away to the library on business that appeared to be of some importance, and Bertie at once followed his cousin to the drawing-room, where he found her half-reclining on a settee, which was drawn up close to the open window.

There was a full moon, and its sheeny rays fell upon Lady Christabel like a silver halo, and lent her beauty a subtle charm, that even the most confirmed misanthrope would have found it hard to resist.

Bertie's breath came a little faster than usual as he stood for a moment by the door, looking at the exquisite picture she made; then he came to her side, and bending down, raised her hand to his lips, and kissed it passionately.

"Pray don't be so foolish!" she exclaimed, rather sharply, as she withdrew it. "Suppose someone saw you?"

"Well, what then?"

"They would say you were—indiscreet."

"And they would say the truth, for discretion and love always are at variance with each other."

"Yes," agreed Lady Christabel, with a half sigh. "I am afraid they are. I know they are in my case."

"Then you confess you love me still?"

Once more he took her hand and held it pressed firmly against his heart.

He was half kneeling, half sitting, on the couch beside her, his eyes fixed on hers, his warm breath stirring the soft tendrils of hair on her white forehead.

The flush on her cheek deepened. Clearly she was not unmoved by his proximity.

"And suppose I do confess that I love you still?" she exclaimed, with a sort of restless defiance. "What good will it do either me or you?"

"This!" he said, his voice low and vehement with suppressed passion. "I would take you away, and marry you in spite of yourself. I would crush from your breast all that is ambitious, all that is unworthy of you, and I would plant in its place that seed of pure love which is worth all the wealth, all the fame, the world can offer you!"

For a minute the passion and eagerness of his wooing carried her away with them.

He looked so handsome as he knelt there at her feet, like some young, sculptured Apollo, into whom life and warmth and vitality had been breathed, that, just for a few heart-beats, she was very near yielding.

After all, what could society give her in exchange for love like this?

Then prudence came, like a cold wind, and chilled her warmth. She drew back, and shook her head.

"Dreams, Bertie—idle dreams!" she said, with a slight tinge of bitterness in the low music of her voice. "If I were rich myself—if even I had been brought up to poverty, I would sacrifice everything for you, but such is not the case. I was born in luxury, I have been cradled in it. I have hardly had a wish that has not been gratified, and to be deprived of all this at one blow would mean—misery. Wait a minute!" she cried, silencing him, as he would have spoken. "I know what you are going to say—that you would work for me; but what does that mean? It means that all the best years of my life would be spent in waiting, and at the end of them I should have what you call a competence. No, Bertie, I have considered everything, and the conclusion I have come to is that I must give you up—finally."

His face fell forward on his breast, and he uttered a deep groan. For three years he had wasted his love on this woman—for three years he had been the slave of her caprices—and waiting patiently in the faint hope that sometime his affection might be requited. People had told him she was mercenary, ambitious, vain of her beauty, and heartless, but he had not heeded what they said. Her loveliness intoxicated him like strong wine; her voice thrilled him as no other had power to do. When he was away from her life seemed empty, void, desolate. Only in her presence did he really feel that he lived.

There was a silence for a few minutes after she ceased speaking. The moonlight, breathing as it did of peace and calm, stole into the room, and fell on Bertie's bowed head, and on the statuesque grace of Lady Christabel, in her shimmering robes of green and silver.

It was characteristic of her that on this last evening, when she intended giving him his final *congé*, she should make herself look as charming as possible. True, she would throw him over, but she would not let him love her the less if she could help it. Power was the very air she breathed—she could not live without it.

"Christabel!" he exclaimed at last. "You do not mean this—you *cannot* mean it! I

["WHY, YOU ARE A VERITABLE CINDERELLA," HE CRIED. "YOU HAVE BLOSSOMED OUT INTO A BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS!"]

thought, when you wrote and asked me to be at the Castle to-night, that it was for the purpose of telling me you had decided to publicly announce our engagement. I never *dreamed* of—*this*!"

"I told you to come earlier than you intended because I thought it would give us a chance of being alone together, and therefore a better opportunity for an explanation," she returned. "Besides, there was something else I wanted you to know—I am betrothed to Lord Earncliff!"

Her voice dropped a little as she made the announcement, still it was perfectly steady, notwithstanding. She watched him intently as she spoke, but she was hardly prepared for the grey pallor that overspread his face, making it look curiously old and haggard. The sight of it sent a pang through even her selfish heart.

"Bertie—Bertie, don't look like that!" she exclaimed, putting her fair white hands on his shoulders, with a momentary feeling of compunction. "Oh, my darling, don't you see that it is *dreadful* for me to have to say this to you?"

"Then why do you say it?" he queried, harshly.

"Because I have no alternative—because I have been brought up to worship riches and luxury, and I cannot do without them. If I were a queen I would ask for nothing better than to marry you, but I am only a poor Earl's portionless daughter, and I must bow to the fates that I cannot control!"

He shook his head incredulously as he looked at her out of eyes that had grown dim and dark with pain. He was beginning to see her as she was, but—Heaven help him!—he loved her none the less for the knowledge. Indeed, it seemed to him that his soul had never longed for her as it did at this moment.

"You are engaged to the Marquis of Earncliff?" he said, at length, slowly, and with supreme scorn. "I see now why you sent me away to Turkey three months ago! You were afraid I should be in the way of your courtship."

"I sent you away for the reason I told you, namely, because we had been too much together, and people were beginning to talk. Besides, I wanted to give myself a fair chance of forgetting you."

"And you have succeeded!"

"No, Bertie!" she said, with dangerous softness, while her own hand slid down from his shoulder to nestle in his palm. "I have *not* succeeded, but that is neither here nor there, seeing that the marriage must take place all the same."

The intense selfishness of her words never seemed to strike her. As a matter of fact, it was so much her custom to think wholly and solely of herself that her egotism had grown to be quite unconscious.

After all, she loved Bertie, as much as it was in her nature to love anyone; and for these three years, she had been wavering as to whether she should think the world was lost for his sake.

He was not rich—that is to say, his income amounted to about a thousand a-year; but until quite recently he had been looked upon as the heir of a maiden aunt who was immensely wealthy, and who had announced her intention of leaving all she had to her nephew.

This aunt—Miss Carbonnell—was a half-sister of the late Lady Thornleigh, and therefore an aunt of Lady Christabel Kenmare's; but she did not get on well with the Earl, and there was very little communication between the two families.

Bertie had always been her favourite. But lately there had been a coolness between them, and just six months ago, it came to her knowledge that he was the owner of a certain racehorse which had been instrumental in losing him a good deal of money, and thereupon the old lady had declared that *her* wealth should never find its way into the pockets of betting men, and had immediately altered her will, substituting a hospital in the place of the name of Captain Hubert Carbonnell.

Thus it fell out that, instead of being heir to a hundred thousand pounds, Bertie found himself with no expectations beyond his pay and his own small private fortune.

He bore the reverse very philosophically; shrugged his shoulders, and said he supposed he must be content to eat his bread minus butter in the future!

So far the change had not made much difference to him. He was a popular man, and none of his friends had deserted him, although one or two tradesmen had been more pressing than usual in their requests for payment.

But that Lady Christabel—the woman he loved—should allow herself to be influenced by such sordid motives! This was, indeed, a shock very hard to be borne!

In obedience to her summons he had travelled post-haste across Europe, in the hope that the answer to his suit would be favourable; and, instead of this, he was met with the news of her engagement to another man!

He did not reproach her—words seemed too poor and weak to express what he felt.

Without looking at her, he rose and stumbled out of the room, his face white and haggard, his eyes wild with pain. He locked himself in his room, and then he sat down, and never moved until the grey dawn peeped in through the closed blinds.

Ah, irony of Fate! While his heart was half-broken with love for one cold, selfish, calculating woman, another woman was setting his image up in her soul, and bowing down before it, to lavish upon it the first pure devotion of the tenderest, truest heart that ever beat in maiden bosom!

(To be continued.)

[THE SEARCH IN THE DISMAL SWAMP!]

NOVELETTE.—*continued.*]

A DARING ESCAPE.

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CHAPTER V.—(*continued.*)

FLORIDA is reached at length, beautiful Florida, the land of perpetual summer. I am in a state of constant wonder and admiration! The balmy air, the delicious foliage, the plantations of oranges and bananas, the gorgeous-hued birds, the tropical glow and richness of the flowers and fruits, dazzle and enchant me. I had no idea, until now, that any part of the world could be so passing fair.

Our company is staying for a week only in a large flourishing town, with a fine old cathedral built by the Spaniards. The opera, *Don Giovanni*, is over, but, in response to a flattering ovation, I come forward again, and the familiar melody of "Home, Sweet Home," rings through the vast building.

I have reached the last verse, my audience sits listening as if spell-bound. Suddenly I falter. I have caught sight of a face in the crowd, a bronzed, handsome face, prayed for, longed for, waited for, come at last. It is the face of Julian Tressider!

Our eyes meet in swift, silent recognition. What is it that sends such a sharp arrow of pain through my heart? Beside Julian Tressider sits a girl whose rich dress and dark, queenly, tropical beauty single her out for especial notice.

With an effort I regain my self-control. I finish my song, then, faint, bewildered, heart-sick, I quit the stage.

Julian Tressider's possible engagement or marriage has, oddly enough, until now never once crossed my mind. I have always pictured him in my dreams as a lonely, isolated man, in need of love and sympathy. Now the bitter disillusion is almost more than I can bear. Who is that girl, and in what relation does she stand to him?

Sir Percy Delahaye, who makes a point of being present at each performance, has recognised Julian Tressider. He followed the direction of my eyes, and understood at once the cause of my agitation.

I saw his dark face blanch; I detected the evil glance he threw at Tressider, a glance full of hatred and menace. For some reason he is the latter's enemy, while he knows enough, if he pleases, to denounce Julian Tressider, and give him up to justice as an escaped convict.

By some means I must warn the man I love of this threatened danger; then, at any cost, tear his image from my heart, since he has all too quickly forgotten me.

That lovely girl, his wife perhaps, must for ever stand between us. What have I left to live for, I moan, as I fling myself down on the floor of my room, and give way to a fit of passionate weeping that leaves me faint and trembling in every limb.

Will Julian Tressider seek an interview with me, I wonder, the next morning! If not, how am I to find him, to warn him against Sir Percy's probable machinations? Can——

"If you please, miss, a gentleman wishes to see you," says my maid, entering the room at this moment. "He is waiting downstairs. He told me to give you his card."

The name engraved on the visiting card is Frank Rutledge, yet I feel certain it is no other than *he*. My heart beats fiercely as I go downstairs to the hotel sitting room.

A tall, stalwart, handsome man comes forward to meet me. It is, indeed, Julian Tressider, like and yet so unlike the haggard fugitive from justice I befriended once on Dartmoor.

He is well-dressed, his face is bronzed, a long drooping brown moustache partly conceals the mobile, sensitive lips. He looks and speaks with an air of manly confidence. He holds out both hands to me as I approach him, and I cannot refrain from taking them.

"Then you—you recognised me last night?" I say confusedly.

"Yes," he replies, his voice hoarse with emotion. "As soon as you appeared upon the stage I knew you. It was indeed a surprise, a bewildering surprise, to identify the famous singer, Beatrice D'Artois, with Miss Brookfield of Dartmoor! You are not angry with me for seeking you out? I could not stay away."

"No, I thought you would come," I continue, with forced composure. He shall never, never learn the pain I have suffered on his account. "I wished to see you, Mr. ——"

"Rutledge," he interposes. "You know why I am not free to use my own name."

"Yes, oh, yes! I wished to warn you against a possible danger. Sir Percy Delahaye is here. He has recognised you, and I have every reason to believe he bears you some ill-will for which you can doubtless account."

"Delahaye!" he says, musingly. "I knew him before he inherited his title, but only as an ordinary acquaintance. We never disagreed. Even if he has recognised me I fail to see why he should do me such an ill turn as to denounce me!"

"He is well acquainted with the details of your escape," I reply, repeating to him the allusions to Dartmoor made by Sir Percy on a previous occasion. "That he is your enemy also I feel convinced."

"It is very strange. I cannot understand it at all," remarks Julian Tressider, a clouded expression crossing his face. "How could those incidents have become known to him? I did not once encounter Delahaye after my escape. Had I done so no allusion to the aid you rendered me would have crossed my lips. I would have died sooner than implicate you in any way. I cannot account for this

supposed enmity of his. What," with a sudden change of tone, "is he doing here now?"

"Enjoying the good sport that Florida affords, I believe; that at least is the reason he assigned in joining us," I answer, indifferently.

It is hard, fearfully hard, to treat him with studied coldness, to keep him at arm's length, while his eyes are full of silent pleading and entreaty. Yet I call to mind that dark, lovely girl, his companion of last night, and steel my heart against him.

"Are you certain that he is not your lover?" Julian Tressider asks abruptly, imperiously, wincing as he pronounces the word.

"Mr. Tressider!" I exclaim, proudly, "that is not a permissible question. My private affairs can hardly possess any great interest for you!"

My words wound him so deeply that I regret them as soon as uttered.

"Forgive me," he says, humbly. "For a moment I had forgotten my wretched position. I dared to address you as an equal.

"It is not that," I reply hastily, unable to explain my resentment, which springs from such a different cause. "Tell me something about yourself. How has the world treated you since our last meeting?"

"I am as far off as ever from being able to prove my innocence of the crime for which I was sentenced," he says, quietly. "In other respects, however, things have prospered with me. On coming out here I made the acquaintance of a Mr. Strongford, who owns a large sugar plantation about five miles out. He took a fancy to me, engaged me as overseer and general manager, and I have remained with him ever since. He knows there is a secret connected with my past history, but he never attempts to inquire into it. Strongford is a good fellow, and we are the best of friends. That was his only daughter, Kate, you saw at the theatre with me last night."

"She is very beautiful!" I remark.

"Yes, Kate can count her lovers by the score," he continues, carelessly; then turning to me with a sudden, passionate gesture, he cries, "Stella, Miss Brookfield, what has comes between us to render this meeting such a bitter disappointment? If you could but know how, by day and night, in pain and weariness, in moments of peril, in long lonely watches, your image has been present with me, cheering, consoling, nerving me to fresh efforts, in the hope of one day beholding you again, I think you would accord me a little more warmth and sympathy now!"

I remain silent. Why should he crave for my sympathy when he has *hers?*

"I understand now," he resumes, in a tone of bitter resignation. "Time, success, fame, have changed your attitude towards me. You no longer believe in my innocence as you did that day on Dartmoor. You regret the noble, impulsive act that won my freedom for me; you regard it now as rash and ill-advised. I might have expected this, and yet—— Farewell, Miss Brookfield, I shall never inflict my unwelcome presence upon you again."

He turns to go. I cannot, I dare not, remain silent beneath this false accusation, or suffer him to retain such a wrong impression of me. He has compelled me to speak.

"Stop!" I cry, brokenly, "you are altogether wrong. I believe in your innocence as firmly as ever. I regret nothing; yet why should you value my good opinion so highly? Miss Strongford's should surely be all-sufficient for you?"

A comprehensive look dawns in Julian Tressider's handsome gray eyes. He is beside me again, bending over me, his warm breath fans my cheek.

"Kate Strongford is nothing to me," he says, earnestly, "nor ever will be. At least you shall learn the truth, Stella, though I have vowed never to reveal it. From the time of our first meeting I have loved you and you alone. Hopelessly separated as we are by fate I shall continue to love you to the end."

As he speaks our eyes meet in a glance more eloquent than any words. Julian Tressider starts as if at an unexpected revelation. Half consciously he opens his arms. The next moment I am folded to his breast, steeped in purest bliss, sobbing out in that safe shelter the story of the love so long entertained for him, the cherished hope that we might be fated to meet again. Strong man as he is I can feel him tremble as he listens.

"My darling, my little love!" he exclaims, "this more than compensates me for all I have suffered! I had not dared to hope for such a surpassing joy!"

His kisses fall like rain upon my drooping face. Enfolded within his arms a sense of perfect peace and happiness replaces the vague yearning, the intense loneliness, of the last three years.

I inform him, in answer to his eager questions, of the events leading up to my public career, and Sir Percy's ardent pursuit of me. I implore him, for my sake, to avoid giving the Baronet any occasion of offence, since he is capable of working us so much harm.

Julian only laughs at my fears, yet, when he leaves the hotel an hour later, I feel strangely oppressed. A presentiment of evil overshadowing the man I love in the immediate future haunts me, and refuses to be shaken off. And, as he quits the hotel, Julian Tressider comes face to face with Sir Percy Delahaye.

CHAPTER VI.

We, the members of the opera company, are on our way to Mr. Strongford's plantation, a merry party contained in four large carriages, provided by our generous host. The planter has invited us to spend the day at his residence, doubtless at the instigation of his manager, Julian Tressider, or to call him by his assumed name, Frank Rutledge.

I cannot quite escape the infection of the others' high spirits, although a vague anxiety still oppresses me.

Sir Percy Delahaye is seated in the same carriage with me, and as I glance from time to time at his dark, sinister, handsome face, I wonder if he is meditating any evil towards Julian Tressider.

My fears are intensified by the fact that he will make no allusion to Tressider or admit that he has recognised him. I have even tried to lead up to the subject, and failed. What deep game is this man playing? Before I only disliked him; now, on Julian's account, I am terribly afraid of him. I know the power he wields.

Julian has requested me not to divulge our previous acquaintance.

This is done out of consideration for me; yet I willingly consent from another motive. Should Sir Percy once become aware of our love for each other, he would be a more dangerous enemy than ever.

The plantation is reached after a long and picturesque drive.

Mr. Strongford, a big, handsome, elderly man, accords us a genial welcome, while his daughter Kate plays the part of hostess well and gracefully.

She is a very lovely girl, with a dash of Spanish blood in her veins. Her hair is not unlike my own, of a glossy, purplish-black, fastened with an elegantly-carved comb; but her large, dark eyes, with their heavy, sweeping fringe, are intensely black, sombre as midnight, languorous, yet with veiled fire lurking in their depths.

Her complexion is rich, but transparently clear; her features regular, her face a faultless oval.

I must, indeed, be dear to Julian Tressider, since such wonderful charms have failed to win him from his allegiance to me.

A sumptuous luncheon is served in the large, cool, dining-room.

Amidst the murmur of talk and laughter going on all around I am keenly observant of several things.

Sir Percy Delahaye accepts my lover as a new acquaintance. He seems bent upon ignoring the past.

The two men converse together as if they had never met under any different circumstances.

What am I to infer from this?

Then again: Kate Strongford, while attending to the requirements of her numerous guests, suffering none of them to feel neglected, throws frequent and searching glances in my direction, and that of Julian Tressider.

He, foolish fellow! has seated himself next to me.

He cannot, strive as he will, divert his looks and words of all tenderness.

Sir Percy faces us on the other side, and thus my position is rendered sufficiently delicate and dangerous.

Two pairs of eyes—Sir Percy's and Kate Strongford's—regard us intently.

Once, in looking up, I intercept a glance from the latter, so expressive of hatred and suspicion, that it fairly startles me.

Yet, even as I detect it, the sweeping fringes are lowered, and Miss Strongford addresses a remark to me in her low, rich, musical voice—a gracious remark, yet it fails to remove the impression caused by that look.

Can it be that the planter's daughter cares for Julian Tressider?—that she suspects his *tendresse* for me, and is jealous in consequence? If so, Heaven help us! We had enough to fight against before, without any fresh complication!

Later on, when the plantation has been visited and duly admired, we have some singing, in which Kate Strongford takes part.

The song she selects is one composed by an amateur. It is entitled "Love's Theft," and she renders the half-jesting, half-pathetic words with a passionate abandon that gives me a clue to her real character.

Love once took lodgings within my heart.
He brought with him his quiver and dart;
He paid his rent in smiles and kisses,
In whispered words and tender wishes.
No tenant was ever so welcome there;
Life, at his bidding, grew glad and fair.
Then came a weary, sorrowful day;
And Love, in anger, fled far away.

He lock'd the door,
And took the key.
Ah me!
He lock'd the door,
And took the key,
That none should enter in.

Others have sued and sued yet again;
Empty my heart must ever remain.
Dark and dreary, no footstep shall tread
Over its threshold since Love has fled.
Taking the key, the pitiless thief,
Jealous lest others should bring relief,
Ne'er on its hinges that door shall turn,
Or fire on the cold hearth brightly burn.

'Midst angry tears
Love turned to flee,
Ah me!
But why, in spite,
Have stole the key,
That none should enter in?

As Kate Strongford's rich contralto voice ceased to echo through the room she glanced again in my direction.

Julian Tressider was lounging beside me, talking in an undertone. This time there is no mistaking the passionate jealousy in her large, dark eyes. It adds considerably to my alarm and discomfort.

It is such a relief, at length, to find myself alone in the garden with Julian Tressider, the others having roamed away in various directions. We can hear their voices, but they are not likely to disturb us in this secluded nook.

In front of us stretch a fragrant aisle of

orange trees; on some of them the blossom and ripe fruit are hanging together; the subtle perfume steals pleasantly upon our senses; a mocking-bird is pouring forth a flood of notes, rioting in melody, now a soft strain, now a flood of high, clear notes.

I yield myself up to the bliss of the moment as I lean against an old sun-dial overgrown with jasmine.

"Julian," I whisper, as my lover's arm encircles my waist, "Kate Strongford does not reflect your indifference. She is jealous of me already. Unless I am greatly mistaken, she loves you!"

An embarrassed, annoyed expression crosses his handsome face.

"I cannot altogether deny the truth of your assertion, Stella," he says, reluctantly, "although such an admission, coming from a man, makes him look like a coxcomb. I need hardly assure you that I have done nothing calculated to arouse any warmer feeling than friendship for myself in Kate Strongford's breast. Indeed, ever since I became conscious of it, I have endeavoured, in so far as I could, to intimate to her the hopeless nature of such an attachment."

"Oh, I am not in the least jealous," I reply, looking far away towards the palmetto trees tossing their beautiful feathery plumes against the turquoise-blue sky. "I trust you implicitly, Julian. I am sorry for Miss Strongford. Unrequited love must be the heaviest cross a woman is ever called upon to bear. Yet I am certain that she suspects our mutual attachment, and dislikes me in consequence. We must be very cautious. That passionate nature of hers, once aroused, would stop at nothing. Then there is Sir Percy to be considered. Julian, did you notice how keenly he watched us at luncheon? I dread that man intensely! What motive can he have in ignoring the past, and treating you as a perfect stranger? It is not done out of any kindly consideration entertained for you."

"I mean to have an interview with him to-morrow," he says, decisively. "I don't like this fighting in the dark. I must ascertain, if possible, Delahaye's exact attitude towards me—if I stand in any peril through him. Why he should regard me with enmity I can't imagine, save as a successful rival; and that fact has not been permitted to transpire."

"Neither must it," I rejoin, earnestly. "Promise me, Julian, that you will exercise caution and forbearance. Remember your perilous position, and the probable consequences of offending Sir Percy."

"Am I likely to forget either?" he asks, bitterly. "Stella, darling, I must have been mad the other day when I revealed my long-cherished love for you! I dare not bind you to anything approaching an engagement, since I can never make you my wife!"

"Why not?" I ask, nestling a little closer to him.

"What a question!" he exclaims. "Think of your position—and mine! I should be a dastard to take such an advantage of your love for me! Unless I can establish my innocence, and face the world a free man again, with an untarnished reputation, I shall never marry. And this is so unlikely to occur. As long as I live the shadow of unmerited disgrace will probably darken my life, and render me a fugitive from justice. Think of the fate awaiting you should you become my wife. At any moment I might be recognised, re-arrested, and taken back to England a prisoner."

"You cannot frighten me away from you," I reply, taking his dear hand in mine, and kissing it. "I would rather be your wife, ay, even under those circumstances, than any other man's. Considered apart from you, Julian, what little wealth and fame I may have gained are valueless to me. On my return to England I shall employ the best detective talent, and never rest until I have fathomed the mystery surrounding the crime wrongly imputed to you, till I have traced the real culprit. Tell me once more all the details connected with your arrest!"

He complies, and I listen to his narrative, carefully noting each point which I may find useful and important later on, when my investigations are set on foot.

The son of a poor country clergyman, long since dead, Julian Tressider had come to town to push his fortunes, having secured, through interest, a good situation in a large mercantile house in the city. By degrees, in common with so many other young men, he drifted into a fast set, which comprised Percy Delahaye, although the two men never became very intimate. He lived beyond his means, without, however, being guilty of any other form of dishonesty. Then, one day, without warning of any kind, the blow fell. Two detectives waited upon him. He was wanted on a charge of manufacturing forged bank notes. His room was searched, and, to his horror and bewilderment, a bundle of flash notes, chemicals, engravers' tools and other damning evidence were found concealed in a cupboard.

As an amateur engraver, Julian Tressider was known to be skilful, a fact which went terribly against him at the trial. He could not account for the presence of the notes. He could only declare solemnly they had been placed there without his knowledge, an assertion which no one credited. The result was the heavy sentence of fourteen years' penal servitude, and the daring escape from Dartmoor already chronicled.

"When I tell you," he says sadly, in conclusion, "that I have not the faintest idea as to the identity of the man who wrought this fiendish havoc in my life, or his motive in so doing, you will understand the hopeless nature of the task you have undertaken."

"Difficult, perhaps, but not hopeless," I reply firmly. "Heaven will help me, since my cause is a just one. I shall make it the one aim of my life, Julian, to establish your innocence. Meanwhile, although far apart, we shall have the knowledge of our love to console us, dear. You will write to me by every mail? How was it you omitted to inform me of your safe arrival in America, according to promise?"

"I wrote several times," he says, "a few cautious lines, containing an address, but no signature. It is strange they failed to reach you. I had so hoped for a reply, and I was bitterly disappointed when it failed to arrive."

"I never received your letters," I inform him. "I shall write, asking the Vicar about them on my return to England. Oh, Julian, what a blank my life would have been had we not met again!"

He takes me in his arms and kisses me passionately by way of reply, then slips an old-fashioned, but valuable, amethyst ring on my finger.

"It belonged to my mother," he says. "It is the pledge of our betrothal, Stella; the token that you belong to me, and me alone. Darling, selfish as it may be, I *cannot* give you up now! For joy or sorrow our hearts must remain for ever united."

We are so absorbed in each other that we fail to hear a faint rustling amongst the rose-trees and glossy camellia bushes just behind us. We are blissfully ignorant of the close proximity of Sir Percy Delahaye, in the character of an eaves dropper. His face wears its most malignant expression as he steals softly away, his white, sinewy hand clenched till the nails bite into the flesh.

"For the second time he has crossed my path in life," he muses. "Is it fate or chance that renders our interests so inimical? I care little which. He *shall* not escape me this time—I swear it. I am determined to remove him effectually. Curse you, Julian Tressider; you have played your last card, and—ah, Miss Strongford, I beg your pardon!"

The exclamation crosses his lips as he suddenly encounters the planter's daughter. Percy Delahaye is swift in arriving at conclusions.

Kate Strongford's white, rigid, beautiful face, her despairing attitude, convince him that she also has witnessed the love-scene just enacted. He recognises in this jealous, passion-tortured woman a fitting instrument with which to effect the evil purpose he has in view.

"You are ill," he says, considerately. "Allow me to assist you into the house."

He offers her his arm, and, with some incoherent reply, she accepts it. They walk slowly onwards.

"I, too, have just received a bitter shock," continues Sir Percy. "Assuming that you also witnessed that declaration of love between Mdlle. D'Artois and your father's manager, Frank Rutledge, you will understand the cause of my suffering."

"I heard little or nothing," she replies, briefly; "but I *saw* her in his arms. I suppose," with a bitter, joyless laugh, "that you also are in love with her?"

"Yes. I love her," he admits, "so well that I am determined she shall never marry Frank Rutledge!"

Kate Strongford glances anxiously at his set, resolute face. She recognises in the Baronet a kindred spirit. Why should they not enter into a compact to prevent this dreaded union?

"How can you hinder it?" she demands, eagerly.

Sir Percy comes to a standstill.

"Miss Strongford," he rejoins, "before I answer that question there must be perfect confidence between us. May I infer that you are equally desirous of preventing this match, of placing an effectual barrier between Mdlle. D'Artois and Frank Rutledge?"

"Yes," she cries with fierce candour, a burning light in her dark eyes, "for I love him. I would do anything—dare anything—in order to keep them apart!"

"I can place this power in your hands," he resumes, tearing a leaf from his pocket-book, and writing a few lines in pencil on it. "This note, given to the nearest inspector of police, will for ever separate the two people we have a mutual interest in keeping apart."

Kate Strongford peruses the note with a perplexed expression. It ran as follows:—

"Julian Tressider, of Dartmoor renown, is here in hiding. Frank Rutledge, Mr. Strongford's manager, can supply you with all information respecting him. Refer to personal description issued at time, and oblige, yours truly. JUSTICE."

"What is the meaning of it?" she asks. "Who is Julian Tressider?"

"An old sweetheart of Mdlle. D'Artois," explains Sir Percy. "He got into a terrible scrape some years ago, and fled to South America. I met and recognised him the other day. His arrest will put a stop to all further love-making between Rutledge and Mdlle. D'Artois."

"Yet you tell them to appeal to him for information?"

"Yes. He will be compelled to admit then what he knows about Tressider, and it is of a nature, when made public, to separate him for ever from the woman he loves. You can avail yourself of the note, or not, as you deem best."

Only one thing is obvious to Kate Strongford's passion-blinded mind. If Julian Tressider can be unearthed the bond of love between Beatrice D'Artois and Frank Rutledge will, for some reason, be severed. Perhaps Tressider may prove to be more than her lover. What if he is actually the singer's husband?

That arch-fiend, Delahaye, has effected his purpose. She resolves to act in accordance with his directions. No idea that any harm will accrue to the man she loves, that Julian Tressider and Frank Rutledge are identical, crosses her mind. Percy Delahaye has deceived her on this point, well aware that she would refuse to betray Frank Rutledge of deliberate intent.

"The note shall be delivered," she says, firmly.

"When?"

"To-morrow. I need hardly thank you for having written it, though. You have a purpose of your own to serve in so doing."

He shrugs his shoulders.

"It might give rise to a prejudice against me in Mdlle. D'Artois' mind were I to be directly instrumental in bringing Julian Tressider to light again," he says, calmly; "and that I wish to avoid. I have endeavoured to serve you as well as myself in this matter, Miss Strongford."

I am intensely happy during the pleasant drive home. The calm, silvery radiance of the evening star seems to shine deep into my heart, and no voice warns me of the evil in store for the one I love best on the morrow.

CHAPTER VII.

It wants only an hour to the time of performance on the following night. I am about to quit the hotel for the theatre. The carriage is waiting at the door to convey me there. Will Frank Rutledge ride over from Fairview, I wonder, as I throw on my light mantle in front of the Psyche glass. He promised to get some flowers for me, rare flowers, that grow only in the swamps for which Florida is famous. He may bring them to-night, providing——.

Someone opens the door and enters my room unceremoniously at this moment. I turn round in all astonishment to behold—Kate Strongford.

What has happened? She is panting for breath. As she throws back the hood which conceals it I see that her dark beautiful face is ghastly pale, her great lustrous eyes burn with fear and anguish. She looks the personification of tragedy, standing there in the centre of the room, her gaze riveted upon me.

"Miss Strongford, what brings you here? What is the matter?" I say, fearful lest any harm should have befallen Frank Rutledge.

"Send your maid away," she says, imperiously. "I wish to speak to you alone."

I dismiss the wondering woman, and confront my unexpected visitor in dire suspense.

"Do you know where Frank Rutledge is at this moment?" she inquires.

"No, not unless he is at Fairview," I reply, naming the plantation. "I have not seen him since yesterday. Tell me, I implore you, has anything happened to him?"

Kate Strongford's dark eyes regard me with a glance of such intense, withering hatred that I quail beneath it.

"For what has happened you are responsible," she cries, "you alone! I saw you in his arms yesterday, and the sight maddened me, loving him as I do. But for your arrival Frank Rutledge would have bestowed on me the affection I craved, and which you have stolen. In the height of my passion I encountered Sir Percy Delahaye, who had also been a witness of your love-scene. He played me false. He told me I could easily separate you and Frank Rutledge by giving up to justice a certain Julian Tressider, who had once been your lover. He gave me a note to deliver to the head of police in this town. An hour ago I presented it to learn from him what, it appears, he had long suspected—that Julian Tressider and Frank Rutledge are identical!

"Sir Percy Delahaye has used me as his tool, but he did not foresee the result. I am not to be tricked with impunity. I will save Frank yet, although the police are out searching for him in every direction. It shall not be said that I betrayed him to a shameful fate. If you know where he is to be found, tell me, that I may warn him of his danger."

"I do not know," I moan. "Oh, Heaven, forgive you and Sir Percy for the part you have played!"

"Frank left home soon after dinner," she continues, rapidly; "and no one has seen him since!"

A sudden light breaks in upon me.

"Perhaps," I cry, eagerly, "he has gone to the swamps. He promised to get some flowers for me which can only be obtained there."

"In that case," says Kate Strongford, "we must meet him on his way back, and bid him return to the swamps, and stay there till the search grows less keen. I know the waterways well; but, unfortunately, I cannot manage the boat by myself, or I should not solicit *your* aid. I sprained my wrist badly yesterday. I can scarcely hold an oar. If he is to be saved you must accompany me!"

"But in less than an hour I am expected to appear at the theatre!" I exclaim, despairingly, torn in two between a sense of duty and the desire to save my lover.

"And he loves you?" she retorts, in a tone of intense scorn. "You, who value your professional reputation above his liberty! It is for you that he has passed me by—I, who would die for him! I will go alone, since I dare not trust any of the negroes!"

This is more than I can endure.

"Stop! I will accompany you," I cry, hurriedly, changing my bonnet and mantle for a long, dark, loose-fitting cloak, and a little velvet cap.

Writing a note to the manager, I inform him that I am unable to appear to-night; that the under-study must take my place at short notice.

This note despatched, I put a flask of wine and some biscuits in my pocket.

"Now!" I say, proudly, turning to my undesirable companion, "I am ready. You will not find me lacking in courage or devotion, Miss Strongford!"

"We must be very cautious," she rejoins. "Our movements may be watched. I could not altogether conceal the emotion his disclosure gave rise to from the head of police. He may suspect me of wishing to shield Frank Rutledge. Tie a thick veil over your face. For Heaven's sake walk quickly! Each moment we lose increases his peril!"

She hurries me along till we reach a carriage plying for hire.

We get in, and are driven quickly away from the town towards the river.

I feel giddy and confused, but the cool evening air revives me a little.

I summon all my courage and self-control to my aid. At least, Kate Strongford shall have no cause to despise me—her hated rival.

We alight at some little distance from Mr. Strongford's plantation, and dismiss the carriage.

Kate Strongford leads the way by a short cut to the solitary boat-house, of which she has the key.

"Thank Heaven! He has not returned yet!" she exclaims, fervently. "The canoe he always uses for these excursions is absent. We can manage to get this," indicating a light canoe, "down to the water's edge between us."

In silence we carry the canoe down to the river. Kate Strongford has placed some pine torches in the bottom of it.

I take my seat opposite to her, and we glide swiftly down the river towards the swamp, without being observed by anyone belonging to the plantation.

It is still light enough to see the wide, tranquil reaches, covered with tropical forests, the broad beds of lilies floating in the water.

An alligator rears its ugly head not far from our canoe, yet I utter no scream. I feel no alarm, strange as these experiences are to me. Every faculty is concentrated on our fateful errand.

A stranger position than mine can hardly be conceived.

Kate Strongford, hating me with all the strength of her passionate Southern temperament, making no effort to conceal this hatred, has yet stooped to avail herself of my aid, rather than permit the consequences of her vengeful, jealous act to overtake the man we both love so well.

For his sake, we, the two women most interested in him, have declared a truce, in order to save him from a fate infinitely worse than death!

My heart is very bitter against Kate Strongford as we row steadily on, my strong wrists doing most of the work. But for her Julian Tressider would have stood in no danger of being rearrested. Beyond the necessary instructions I need in propelling the canoe we exchange no remarks. At least we are open enemies, with no semblance of friendship. Yet our love for Julian Tressider, our desire to serve him, is even stronger than the dislike we entertain for each other.

The river leading to the swamp is full of false creeks and channels, yet Kate Strongford seems well acquainted with them. Presently we come to a narrow opening in the near, looming forest. The mouth is narrow, but inside the stream widens out, broad and deep. Kate Strongford lights one of the pine torches and fastens it in the bow of the canoe. We are actually in the strange water-land of the swamps.

I glance around me with a sense of shuddering awe. Even by day the swamps are dim, mysterious, shadowy. By night their appearance defies description. To penetrate their depths with such a companion requires courage indeed. Shall I ever emerge from them again alive is the question that crosses my mind.

Enormous trees, thickly foliaged, keep the sun from ever penetrating to the water. Masses of vine help to shut out the light, and keep in the perfume of the myriad flowers. Channels open out on all sides. By which one will Julian Tressider return? Kate Strongford seems uncertain. She removes the torch from the bow to the stern, for the light to come from behind, that it may dazzle our eyes the less.

The swamp is really a vast wood, standing in a lake. Our torch throws a brilliant orange-hued glow over the vines and flowers, lighting up the dark water vistas of the dim, sweet swamps. Sitting in the bow Kate Strongford acts as pilot. The fire in her splendid dark eyes is no longer veiled. It flashes forth freely. There is something diabolical about her rich-toned beauty. She might be the presiding genius of this weird awful place.

The dusky lights edged with profoundest gloom, the oppressive perfume, the dense forest, begin to affect my senses. Trees growing close together shut out the sky. Silvery Spanish moss hangs down in long, filmy, mist-like veils from all the branches. Vines, coiling, twisting like serpents, mix with the moss. The roof of interlocked branches, many feet thick, stretches miles long, miles wide, in a tight cover over the entire place. I feel stifled. Oh, for light and air!

"Let us shout," says Kate Strongford, breaking the oppressive silence. "He will hear us if he is not far off!"

We shout accordingly till we are hoarse, and the swamps resound with dreadful echoes, but no deep, familiar voice responds.

Looking down I see that the lake is pellucid, absolutely devoid of mud, red-brown as amber in here, like so much clear, fine wine. The tree-trunks rise clearly from the transparent tide. Their huge roots can be seen coiling on the bottom. Grey-white cypresses rise erect and branchless, like the columns of a Gothic cathedral. The mist of moss is decked with fragrant, vividly-tinted flowers. There is no underbrush, only the great trunks and the water.

The sense of suffocation increases. I grow faint and giddy. What if——

Oh, thrice blessed sound! In response to another shout we have raised I hear Julian Tressider's voice. His canoe is coming towards us down one of the broad, watery aisles. I utter a silent prayer of thanksgiving. I am no longer alone with this malignant woman. My lover is close at hand to protect me.

"Miss Strongford, Stella!" he exclaims, addressing me familiarly in his astonishment. "Good heavens, what has induced you to visit the swamps by night? You might have lost your way in some of the winding channels."

I remain silent. The embarrassing nature of the situation, now that we have met, keeps me silent. It is Kate Strongford who takes the initiative, and in hard, strained tones, informs him of the danger he is in of being re-arrested, and her share in leading up to this unanticipated misery.

She makes no attempt to shield herself from blame, yet neither does she spare Sir Percy. She seems oblivious of shame, pride, remorse, of Tressider's probable guilt or innocence, of all save a frantic desire to shield him from the consequences of her own mad act.

He utters no word of reproach as she ceases speaking, but his face grows very pale. There is a dangerous gleam in his grey eyes.

"You cannot forgive me?" she moans.

"I can forgive you, Kate," he replies, "vindictively as you have acted. Your blow, aimed at Mdlle. De Artois, has recoiled upon me. I would far rather that you had attempted to injure me than her—yet I forgive you. Towards Sir Percy Delahaye I shall exercise less forbearance, however. The hound, the double-dyed traitor, to use you as his instrument in betraying me! The day of reckoning between us cannot, shall not, be long delayed!"

"Dismiss all thoughts of vengeance for the present," I cry, as the canoes float side by side. "Only consult your own safety, Julian."

"How is it that you are together?" he asks, briefly.

"I went to her hotel to ascertain where you had gone," explains Kate Strongford, in the same hard tone, "and to request her aid in managing the canoe, since I had sprained my wrist. I would gladly have dispensed with all assistance had it been possible."

"I remembered the flowers you promised to get for me," I interpose, "and we came to the swamps, hoping to find you here."

"Yes. I had to go a long way in to procure them," he replies, pointing to a mass of blossom in the bow of the canoe, 'or I should have been home long ago. So, once more, I am a hunted fugitive from justice. The sooner this miserable existence is terminated the better."

"Julian, for my sake, do not become reckless—desperate," I whisper, earnestly. "Think what we have dared to warn you of your danger."

"My brave darling!" he exclaims, passionately, ignoring Kate Strongford's presence. "It is on your account I regret my wretched position. It maddens me to reflect upon the risk you run in coming here. How will you account for your absence from the theatre to-night, I——"

A faint, distant shout reaches us at this moment, thrilling each strained nerve with fresh fear.

Kate Strongford starts violently; then turns towards us, her face white and resolute.

"We are pursued!" she says. "I hardly thought they would venture into the swamps by night! You had better defer your love-making to a more convenient season. Our only hope lies in being able to reach Uncle Cæsar's Cabin. I defy them all to find us there. I know the way to it. You," addressing Julian Tressider, "have only to follow. I will save you yet!"

The shouts are growing nearer. I listen to them in silent agony. Swiftly, noiselessly, the two canoes glide through the clear water. Presently we leave the broad channel for a narrow side one, the windings of which are so intricate I cannot remember them; yet Kate Strongford is a skilful pilot.

She bids me stop at length. We force our way beneath the overhanging boughs and foliage of great trees, at her direction, to see in front of us a small wooden shanty.

Uncle Cæsar's Cabin, so called from a runaway negro who found refuge here previous to the emancipation, is built upon great roots of trees, to which the planks of the floor have been nailed down. The water flows beneath it. The surrounding foliage is so dense that not a glimpse of the cabin can be observed from the channel.

Julian Tressider has scarcely drawn our canoes up on to the floor of the cabin, and extinguished the torches, when we hear the plash of oars, and the pursuing boat approaches our hiding-place!

CHAPTER VIII.

"We have little to fear," Julian Tressider whispers to me reassuringly. "The exact locality of the cabin is known only to a few persons."

Yet I hold my breath as I stand there beside him in the darkness, and pray fervently that we may escape detection.

The voices of our pursuers come still nearer. Among them I can detect that of Sir Percy Delahaye.

Tressider recognises it also, and each fierce passion within his breast is aroused.

The Baronet has been to my hotel, it transpires later on, and ascertained in whose company I had quitted it.

He had drawn his own inferences from Kate Strongford's visit to me.

Her bold move in denouncing him, and appealing to me to aid her in defeating his villainy, has, he knows, rendered his suit hopeless.

Since I cannot possibly entertain a worse opinion of him, he has gratified his rage and malice by openly joining the pursuing party, and helping to hunt Julian Tressider down.

Standing in the doorway of the cabin, Tressider parts the thick foliage in front of it till he can look through, and discern the party in the boat by the light of the torches they carry, while remaining invisible himself.

The boat contains four police officers and our evil genius, Sir Percy Delahaye. They are holding a consultation as to the best channel to take.

"I knew we were only wasting time coming up this side-channel," one observes. "It don't lead anywhere, that I can see. Our bird is off in some other direction."

"Yet I could swear I saw the gleam of a torch far ahead of us as we came along," replies Sir Percy, in clear, distinct tones. "I don't purpose leaving these swamps until he is taken. I will give fifty guineas for the capture of Julian Tressider, alias Frank Rutledge! Now do your best to earn the promised reward. Take him, dead or alive!"

His concentrated hatred leaps forth in this venomous speech.

A gleam from the torches in the boat penetrates the foliage, and shines into Uncle Cæsar's Cabin.

I see Julian Tressider standing on the threshold, his handsome face set and rigid; I see Kate Strongford step forward, and place her hand upon his arm, looking in the red glare of the torchlight like some beautiful evil angel.

"That is the man who induced me to betray you!" she whispers. "Sooner or later his life shall pay the penalty!"

"He dies *now*!" is the reply, as, beside himself at such relentless persecution and treachery on the part of a man he has never wronged, Julian Tressider draws a pistol from his breast, takes aim, and levels it at the unconscious Baronet's head, reckless of the consequence of this rash act, thirsting only for vengeance. Another second, and——

Heaven lends me strength and promptitude. I spring forward. I wrest the revolver from his grasp without discharging it—the report would betray our hiding-place.

Breathless, exhausted, I hear the stroke of the oars, as the boat containing our pursuers glides away. I see by the vanishing light Kate Strongford's terrified face. She, too, realises the narrowness of our escape from detection.

"Oh, Julian! were you mad to attempt his life, and under such circumstances?" I murmer, "to risk all for revenge. For the second time I have saved you, and from a worse peril than the previous one. Thank Heaven that you are not a murderer!"

"My darling, forgive me!" he says, contritely, alive, now that the frenzy of passion is spent, to the results of the contemplated evil. "My good angel, you have indeed preserved me from crime, from placing myself and others in a terrible position! Yes, I was mad, Stella; but surely that villain's conduct is calculated to make me so? Do not be afraid; my temper shall not get the upper hand of me again."

He throws his arms around me in the darkness. But for this support I should sink to the ground—my strength has deserted me at last.

I kiss him in token of forgiveness, and lean my weary, aching head upon his breast.

Kate Strongford neither moves nor speaks.

"I think I may venture to light one of the torches now," Julian observes presently, breaking the silence.

"Yes. We must return as soon as possible, and leave you here," she replies. "You could not have a better hiding-place!"

"But how can you exist here, even for a few days?" I ask, despairingly, viewing the cabin, which is quite destitute of even the rudest furniture. "And by what means will you obtain food?"

"I shall attend to that," says Kate Strongford, quietly. "Mr. Tressider's wants will be supplied while he remains here. You need be under no apprehension on that score, Mdlle. D'Artois."

For a moment I feel jealous of her privilege in being able to minister to his requirements. Then I dismiss the feeling as unworthy. If he can but succeed in evading his pursuers, thanks to her connivance, I ought to be more than satisfied.

"Oh, I shall be all right here," Julian replies, with assumed lightness; "and Kate will not let me starve. Now I will launch your canoe, or your prolonged absence will give rise to suspicion. Stella, my love, my darling, for the present we must part. Hope on, trust on; do not let your faith in my innocence die out. As soon as I can succeed in reaching another part of the world, where I shall be comparatively safe from detection, you shall receive tidings of me."

He kisses me passionately again and again, then places me in the canoe, and turns to Kate Strongford.

"I enjoin you to see that Mdlle. D'Artois reaches the hotel in safety," he says, sternly. "In partial atonement for the harm you have wrought me, however unintentionally, take care of her, and see that no danger threatens her on the way home. I shall hold you responsible for her safe return."

A scornful smile flits across Kate Strongford's dark, clear cut face at his words. They wound her like daggers, betraying, as they do, his love for me.

"She will come to no harm while with me," she replies, with proud emphasis. "Are you afraid to trust us together?"

I know the fear at his heart, but I will not permit him to think I share it. We bid each other good-bye, and the canoe glides away from that dreary spot. Julian Tressider is left behind. I am once more alone with Kate Strongford.

Again the oppressive perfume of the flowers, the close, still atmosphere renders me faint and giddy. My vision becomes blurred. Lights dance before my eyes. There are three Kate Strongfords sitting in the bow instead of one. As we pass through the narrow lane of flowering plants the miasma of scent overpowers me completely, and I faint.

When I recover consciousness we have reached the edge of the swamps. The dense forest is left behind. Once more the clear

starlit sky is over our heads, the fresh air plays around us. With a sense of unspeakable relief I sit up and face my companion. Presently we land and replace the canoe in the boat-house.

"If you would only permit me to thank you for what you have done in order to save him—for what you purpose doing!" I exclaim, impulsively, in a vain desire to establish more friendly relations between us.

"I require no thanks, least of all from you!" Kate Strongford replies, with a superb disdain which I cannot help admiring. "What I did was done for *his* sake alone. You might tell me, though, what you meant by that remark; that, for the second time, you had saved him!"

I comply with her request. I tell her all. She knows that Julian Tressider cared for me ere he had met her, that I have not robbed her, as she previously imagined, of his love.

She makes no comment on my narrative, however it may have affected her. In silence we walk towards the planter's residence. He meets us at the door, a troubled, anxious expression on his genial face. To my relief and surprise he asks no questions respecting our night voyage. He shrewdly suspects its motive, and, desirous as he is that his erstwhile favourite and manager should avoid arrest, Mr. Strongford is more likely to praise than blame us for conniving at his escape.

Refreshments are hospitably pressed upon me by the planter. I cannot eat, but I drink a glass of wine. I have tasted nothing since starting; the biscuits and sherry-flask I left with Julian Tressider in the hut.

One of the planter's carriages is put in requisition to convey me back to the hotel. I reach it between three and four in the morning. The manager of our company, who has been quite at a loss to account for my absence, comes forward to meet me, accompanied by his wife. He is inclined to be angry, to resent my non-appearance at the theatre overnight.

"My dear child, how you have alarmed us!" cries Mrs. Rupert, hastening towards me. "Where *have* you been?"

I strive to answer, but the room whirls madly round. There is a sound of rushing waters in my years, and without a moan I fall unconscious at her feet.

* * * * *

England again, dear old England, beloved by all loyal English hearts above other countries, despite its grey skies, bleak winds, and frequent fogs. Indeed, I actually prefer them to the blue heavens and cloudless sunshine associated in my mind with so much suffering.

I have made my home once more with the Paolis, although my five years' apprenticeship, as it were, to the Professor are at an end, and I am free to form my own professional engagements, to receive the whole of the large salaries which, as a successful and popular *cantatrice*, I can command.

Having few friends and no relations of my own, I have gladly elected to stay on with the kindly genial little Italian and his wife, to whom, in a great measure, I owe my good fortune. Were I their own child they could hardly treat me with more affection and regard. Their quiet but luxurious *menage* suits me far better than an establishment of my own.

A severe illness, which quite incapacitated me from appearing in public, and drove the manager nearly frantic, was the result of that eventful excursion to the swamps.

Upon my recovery a note was given to me, written and forwarded by Julian Tressider, containing the welcome information, that, aided by Kate Strongford and her father, he had contrived to elude his pursuers, and to get away to Africa, where a friend of Mr. Strongford's, who owned a large ostrich farm, had provided him with employment. Soon after this I returned with the others to England.

Julian Tressider and I have never met since that terrible night passed in the swamps. We correspond regularly, our love for each other is deep and true as ever, yet our hope of one day becoming man and wife seems destined never to be realised.

The attempt to investigate and trace the crime attributed to Julian Tressider home to the actual offender, which I have renewed from time to time, has proved a complete failure.

The detectives I have employed were sceptical as to Tressider's innocence, and of the opinion that there was really no case to be gone into. The inquiries they set on foot led to no discovery or arrest. I have simply spent a great deal of money to no purpose.

Julian Tressider is as far off as ever from receiving legal absolution for the sin he did not commit, and that hope deferred which maketh the heart sick darkens both our lives, widely parted as we are by distance and adverse fate.

I have reached my two-and-twentieth birthday. More than one good offer of marriage has fallen to my share, more than one title been placed at my feet, yet I am still Stella Brookfield, and, failing Julian Tressider's reappearance, I shall never marry.

It is a foggy day in March. As I sit alone in the pretty, cosy, drawing-room with my favourite Scamp, no longer a wild puppy, but a staid, middle-aged dog, at my side, my thoughts revert to the man I love. A more intense yearning than usual to see his face, to hear his voice, to be folded again in close embrace to that loyal heart, takes possession of me till it grows unbearable. Rising I go to the window and look out.

There is little to be seen, however. Now and then a phantom cab, driven by a spectral driver, goes slowly by, or a link held by an invisible hand flashes out of the fog, to vanish into it again. All is dim, shadowy, unreal. I turn away with a shudder. I shall be glad when the Signora, who is out making calls, returns. My thoughts are but mournful companions.

By some process of transition these thoughts shift suddenly from Julian Tressider to Sir Percy Delahaye. Since my return to town I have encountered the Baronet frequently in society, but he has never ventured to renew his suit or to call on the Paolis, whom I have acquainted of his treacherous conduct. My attitude when we meet is sufficient to assure him that entreaty or apology would be worse than useless, that my heart is hopelessly steeled against him. Rumour says that Sir Percy is leading a very fast life, and going generally to the dogs. It seems to me those noble animals are insulted by the comparison.

"A gentleman requesting a subscription to a charity for civilising the African niggers, please, miss," says the footman, breaking in upon the reverie I am indulging in. "He wishes particular to see you."

"Tell him to come in," I say rather wearily. It is one of the penalties of fame that I am pestered with appeals of every possible description. The gentleman enters accordingly. He is very tall, with long grey hair and a flowing grey beard.

"The commendable object we have in view," he commences, "cannot fail to arouse your interest. The African, viewed as a man and a brother——"

He pauses suddenly. The door has closed behind Charles the magnificent. My visitor, assured of this, to my astonishment plucks off his wig and beard, removes his spectacles, and straightens his bent shoulders. My lover, Julian Tressider, whom I had deemed to be thousands of miles away in Africa, stands before me!

"Julian," I gasp. "You!"

He holds out his arms, and I rush into them, every other consideration lost sight of, swallowed up, in the intense joy of reunion. When I lift my face at length it is wet with tears which I have not shed. They fell from his eyes, and he kisses them away.

"What has brought you home?" I ask, as soon as I can speak. "Why have you run this fearful risk of detection?"

"I could bear the separation from you no longer," he replies hoarsely. "You are the magnet, Stella, that has drawn me back to England!"

CHAPTER IX.

So I am responsible for his return. As I realise the danger it involves, the fate in store for him, should he be recognised and re-arrested, I cling yet closer to my lover. It is for *my* sake he has run this risk. How can I reproach him? I to whom his return has afforded exquisite happiness?

"What if Sir Percy Delahaye should become aware of your presence here in England?" I ask, fearfully, when other topics have been discussed.

"I fancy I am keen enough to baffle him," is the confident reply. "I am as far off as ever from understanding that beggar's spite against me. I generally select foggy days for my walks abroad as the safest. I watched the Signora out of the house before ringing to inquire if you were at home, darling!"

He tells me where he is lodging, in a quiet West-end suburb, and I promise to call on him there. What the result of his daring act in returning to England will be I dread to think! We have met again, and for the present this is all-sufficient.

"Julian, will this protracted suspense and waiting ever come to an end?" I ask sadly, as he resumes his disguise and prepares to depart.

"Heaven only knows," is the equally sad rejoinder. "For awhile I can lie *perdu* in town, in order to be near you, Stella. Then, failing any unforeseen occurrence tending to establish my innocence, I must return to Africa. You shall never bear my name while the cruel, undeserved stigma rests upon it. What joy would such a marriage afford us?"

"It is so hard," I cry, "that we should be compelled to suffer thus, to lead parted lives, when you are innocent!"

"Yes, in that fact lies the sting," he answers. "Some fiend incarnate has ruined my life by fastening this crime upon me, and I am powerless to extricate myself from its clutches. Don't cry, darling! Heaven may yet come to our aid, if we continue to trust in its mercy. Give me another kiss. I will enter it as part of your subscription to the fund for civilising the African negro—a nice party he is when you know him. Good-bye, my love, my brave, true-hearted girl!"

As the footman shows Julian Tressider out I walk to the window to obtain a parting glimpse of him. I watch him cross the road and disappear in the fog. Another shadowy form emerges from the gloom, and flits along close behind him. A sudden fear thrills through me. Is my lover being followed, hunted down? What if Sir Percy Delahaye has discovered his return to England, and set the detectives upon his track, with a view to his being sent back to penal servitude? The thought is agony. I try to persuade myself that it is merely by chance a man went close behind him just now, yet my fears refuse to be allayed.

Julian Tressider walks briskly along till he reaches Oxford-street, unconscious of the fact that his footsteps are dogged. The fog clears suddenly, as it not unfrequently does in London; the traffic in the road and the shop-windows become once more visible.

Tressider is about to cross the road when a loud shout arrests his attention. He looks swiftly round. A small, spare, elderly man endeavouring to dodge round in front of an omnibus has been knocked down by the pole. He lies prone beneath the horses' feet. Quick as lightning, ere the wheels can go over him, Julian Tressider darts forward and snatches him from his perilous position at the risk of his own life.

He carries the half-unconscious man on to

the pavement in his strong arms. A crowd gathers quickly round them; the inevitable policeman arrives. The injured man has been badly kicked in the side by one of the 'bus horses. An ambulance is sent for to convey him to the nearest hospital.

Meanwhile, in the attempt to rescue him, Julian Tressider's wig of long grey hair has fallen off and been trampled under foot. The crowd laughs and stares at the odd contrast between the crisp, wavy brown hair left exposed, and the venerable grey beard he wears. Fearful of exciting so much notice he is about to disappear, when a firm, detaining hand is placed upon his shoulder, and the man who has never lost sight of him says quietly,—

"Julian Tressider, I hold a warrant for your apprehension. You are the man who escaped from Dartmoor five years ago, and it has taken us all this time to find you."

Sick at heart, crushed, wretched, Julian Tressider staggers back. For a moment some wild idea of offering resistance flits through his mind, then he dismisses it as hopeless. The shadow of that living death has descended darkly upon him again.

"I am ready to accompany you," he says, briefly. "You need not handcuff me. I shall make no attempt to escape."

But the injured man, to whom someone has administered brandy, has witnessed the arrest. He turns appealingly to the bystanders, an eager, startled look in his eyes.

"For the love of Heaven," he cries, as the detective and Julian Tressider get into a cab, "tell me his name? Did I hear aright? Was it Tressider?"

They answer in the affirmative. The sufferer merely groans, and closes his eyes.

They carry him away to the hospital; the house-surgeon can do but little for him; that kick in the side will cost him his life. He has but a few hours to live.

"Doctor," he whispers, hoarsely, "I'm bound to do one act of justice before I die—to clear an innocent man. Julian Tressider, he as dragged me out from under the very wheels of the 'bus an hour ago, only to be arrested directly after as an escaped convict, never committed the crime that led to his being sentenced to penal servitude.

"He little thought that he was a-trying to save the very man who had helped to ruin him; but I shan't be ungrateful, and I'll clear him yet.

"Those forged notes which he was accused of making were placed in his room by me at the instigation of Sir Percy Delahaye, a gent who had a spite against him. He paid me handsome for the job. I manufactured the flash notes, and concealed them in Mr. Tressider's room during his absence.

"Sir Percy wrote an anonymous letter to the police, informing against him. The place was searched, the notes discovered, and Mr. Tressider found guilty.

"As I'm a dying man, I've told you the solemn truth. You'll see him cleared, won't you? I've often felt uncomfortable about this job, the dirtiest I ever undertook in my life.

"When I heard his name mentioned I was struck all of a heap. It seemed like Heaven's justice, bringing us together again. And the money did me no good—none whatever. It all went, and Sir Percy wouldn't advance me another penny. He knew I dared not betray him; but I've spoken at last, and to some purpose."

The doctor recognised the serious nature of the charge directed against a man so well-known in society as Sir Percy Delahaye.

A magistrate was at once requested to attend at the hospital, and John Vennor's depositions were taken.

Three hours later he died, after receiving an assurance that his statement should be forwarded to the proper authorities, with a view to the establishment of Julian Tressider's innocence.

And of all that has transpired I, Stella Brookfield, remain ignorant until the following morning.

I have long since confided my strange, unhappy love-story to the Paolis. As the Professor scans the columns of the *Daily Telegraph* at breakfast time I see him turn pale; then he glances uneasily in my direction.

My fears, which lie so close to the surface now, are aroused.

"You have just read something in that paper which concerns me," I say, starting up from my seat. "Oh, let me know the worst at once!"

"My dear child," he says kindly, "it is both good and bad, this intelligence, but the good predominates. Sit down, and I will read it to you."

The report of Julian Tressider's rearrest is headed, "A Strange Occurrence." It alludes to a deposition of great importance, made by the man whom Tressider endeavoured to rescue; and which, when published, is likely to lead to his release.

The reporter alludes to the dramatic nature of the incident in Oxford-street; but I can listen to no more now.

"Oh, thank Heaven, thank Heaven!" I sob, hysterically. "It has heard my prayers at length. That encounter was the result not of chance, but Providence. The innocence of the man I love will ere long be established!"

I express my desire, as I grow a little calmer, to go to Julian Tressider at once. If only he might be permitted to hear the glad tidings first from my lips!

But the Professor says they would probably refuse me access to him at present. He bids me remain at home while he goes out in search of fresh information on my behalf.

In my excited condition the hours slip away like moments. The Professor returns, welcome as Noah's dove. He has obtained permission to see the prisoner to-morrow—an interview has been promised.

Meanwhile strenuous efforts are being set on foot to secure Julian Tressider's speedy release.

John Vennor's deposition has been forwarded to the Home Secretary, and several influential men are warmly advocating the prisoner's cause.

"Does Julian know there is hope for him?" I ask. "Surely they will not keep him in ignorance of it?"

"Yes, he knows," is the reassuring reply, "and to-morrow you shall tell him yourself."

The evening papers, when they appear, contain yet more startling intelligence.

Sir Percy Delahaye has committed suicide. He was found at noon by the servants in his study, shot through the head, the smoking pistol still grasped in his lifeless hand, and the world has one bad man the less to be on its guard against.

After learning that his accomplice had betrayed him, and ascertaining the extent to which he was incriminated by the facts disclosed, Sir Percy must have gone at once to his study and shot himself, rather than face the obloquy, the public prosecution awaiting him, when all should stand revealed.

On his desk lay a letter addressed to Julian Tressider, containing an admission of his guilt, and explaining the motive which had led up to the committal of an apparently purposeless crime.

"My desire to efface you, in the first instance," ran this letter, "had its origin in our distant relationship, of which I had every reason to keep you in ignorance.

"Seven years ago a conditional fortune was left me by my grand-uncle, a man verging on his hundredth year. I, his only supposed relation, inherited his wealth; but, in the event of his daughter, who had married against his wishes, and of whom he had long lost sight, or her children or grandchildren, ever coming forward to claim it the bulk of the money was to revert to them, I only receiving a small legacy.

"I thought myself comparatively safe until I met you in town. Your extraordinary likeness to a portrait of my grand-uncle, taken when he was a young man, first aroused my suspicions. I made some cautious inquiries.

"I ascertained you to be his great-grandson on the mother's side. You appeared to have no idea of the relationship, or of the fortune which was legally yours, yet I feared and hated you, by reason of what I had discovered. At any moment the truth might transpire, I might be called upon to yield my wealth up to you. Then a clause inserted in the old man's will inspired me with a fiendish idea.

"You were to inherit, *providing you had been guilty of no act rendering you amenable to the law.* I knew John Vennor as a manufacturer of flash notes, a betting man, a useful tool with which to accomplish a sinister purpose.

"Moreover, he was in my power, and he feared to offend me. With his connivance the affair was arranged.

"When you were sentenced I felt secure. You could not at any future time claim the money left under the will, since you had violated its conditions by becoming a felon.

"Your subsequent escape from Dartmoor annoyed me greatly. I went down there to make inquiries about it. I heard that a suit of convict's clothes had been dug up in a cottage garden, that a labourer had beheld an old woman coming from that cottage leap a stile in a manner which proved her dress to have been merely a disguise.

"The name of the people who had rented the cottage was Brookfield. When I met Miss Brookfield in London, later on, I mentioned these facts in conversation. I inferred from her startled manner that it was she who had connived at your escape.

"I fell madly in love with her. I followed her to South America. There I encountered you again. I discovered you to be my rival in her affections, and I vowed to accomplish your re-arrest. In this I should have succeeded but for the two women who loved you best. They outwitted me, and, for the second time, you escaped.

"I had now a double reason in hating you and hunting you down. My spies informed me of your arrival in England. It was I who set the police upon your track. Your encounter with John Vennor, however, and his confession, implicating myself, has effectually turned the tables. I cannot survive the disgrace of such an *exposé*. *Mon ami*, I leave you the best of the game, and the remainder of the money. I admit my defeat; also that I have injured you beyond the possibility of pardon. I neither ask forgiveness nor desire it. I have staked all and lost. It only remains to efface myself as I once attempted to efface you. For the first and last time I sign myself,—Your affectionate kinsman,

"Percy Delahaye."

This cynical epistle removes the last doubt from our minds with regard to the Baronet's unrelenting animosity towards Julian Tressider.

Little more remains to be said.

Three weeks later Julian Tressider receives that contradiction in terms—a free pardon from Her Majesty's Government for a crime he has never committed.

The peculiar injustice attached to his case has attracted much notice; and on regaining his liberty he receives quite an ovation.

Much against his will, he becomes the hero of the hour. Friends rally round him on all sides. Life is once more radiant with hope and love.

The fortune he should have inherited from his great-grandfather has dwindled down, through Sir Percy's extravagance, to thirty-thousand pounds.

This sum of money he invests in the firm which first employed him, becoming a partner, since all his talent lies in the direction of trade.

News reaches us from South America that Kate Strongford has entered a convent.

Both Julian and I feel keenly sorry for the

lonely old planter, deprived for ever of the society of his beloved daughter.

We know only too well why she has taken this step; but the subject is a painful one, and we seldom allude to it.

Poor, beautiful Kate! Her love was the most genuine thing about her.

"When are we to be married, darling?" asks Julian one day, as we discuss our future prospects. "I cannot afford to wait much longer for my wife!"

"When you please," is my dutiful reply. "Only my dear old friend the Vicar must come from Dartmoor to perform the ceremony. It was he who unearthed your letters to me. They were lying *perdu* at the village post-office. It had not occurred to the postmistress to return or forward them."

"Of course the Vicar shall come, since you wish it," says my lover. "He must hold himself in readiness to tie the knot a month hence. Stella if you had not disguised me so cleverly as an old woman that night, we might have missed all our present happiness!"

"They were poor Aunt Deborah's things," I reply, laughingly. "They had been lying by for years. I little dreamt how useful they would one day prove—long after her death!"

"And your public life?" he asks, in a graver tone. "Are you willing to renounce it for my sake? I could not permit my wife to lead such a twofold existence!"

"More than willing!" I murmur, as I nestle closely to him. For, after all, what are fame and wealth? Mere withered leaves, as compared with love—failing which, the life of a true woman can never be perfect; and this love, stronger than death, is mine. I can afford to renounce the rest!

[THE END.]

A LITTLE COMMON SENSE.

—:o:—

CHAPTER I.

"THERE'S no use telling anyone, Tom."

Lena's pretty face has a slightly troubled look as she speaks; and she glances up at her tall, handsome lover.

"Why not tell? I don't care who knows," that young gentleman says, carelessly.

"Oh, Tom! There'll be—I know there'll be—such a ——"

"Deuce of a row—eh?" Tom breaks in, laughing. "Well, perhaps so. I tell you what, Lena, I want to tell them, just to try the effect. Suppose, to-morrow morning at breakfast, after they all come in—especially Sybil, who's always late—I get up, and say:—'I rise to remark, and my language is plain,' that I am engaged to be married to Helena Floyd. What do you think——"

"Oh, Tom! you wouldn't!" And Lena's little hands close tightly on his arm. "Promise me you won't? Besides, *I* haven't promised positively. It isn't really an engagement, you know."

"What is it, then?" And Tom's laughing eyes rest fondly on the girl's sweet flushed face.

"Oh, I don't know exactly. You—you say you love me, and I—I know I love you, and we are both glad that is settled. But we are just to trust each other without any engagement."

A peal of hearty laughter from Tom makes her blush still deeper and avert her face quickly from his daring eyes. But he gently turns her head until he can see the sweet little face again, then bends and kisses her lips.

There are a few words between the lovers. He tries to extract a promise from her, but in vain.

So he takes five minutes longer, and then goes away lingeringly; turning out the gas in the hall—which is too high for Helena to reach—and closing the front door cautiously after him. Helena steals upstairs in the dark, and lies awake with burning cheeks—too happy to sleep—till the summer-dawn comes in at her windows.

CHAPTER II.

"You ought to have stayed at home last night, Tom," his sister Sybil remarks at the breakfast-table. "The Ellysons were here."

"The saints be praised that *I* wasn't, then," Tom says, coolly.

"Where were you?" she asks, sharply.

"At Jones's, gambling away my substance. I lost all my money, and my watch, my horse and trap, my gun and setter. Jones lent me my horse and trap in order to get home, and——"

"Tom!" bursts out Sybil, angrily; and Mrs. Wyndham's soft voice exclaims, reproachfully, "Oh, my dear boy!" The Judge looks silently amused, and Sybil goes on, crossly, "What's the use of all that nonsense? You were at Mr. Floyd's."

"Very true; so I was," Tom says, tranquilly. "Can you point out any special harm in that?"

Sybil tosses her head. (She is a handsome girl, very like Tom, with the same fine dark eyes and rich brunette complexion.)

"No special harm—*to you*," she says, with emphasis. "Perhaps it might be unfortunate for Helena to imagine you meant anything by your constant visits. Of course she won't understand that it's only *pour passer le temps*."

Tom's white teeth glitter under his moustache.

"Oh, she understands it, I imagine," he says, in his easy, off-hand way. Then he leans back in his chair, and stares through the open window at Mr. Floyd's house. They are next-door neighbours; but Mr. Floyd, Helena's uncle, lives in a quiet frame cottage, while the wealthy Judge resides in a grand mansion, with a velvet lawn spreading wide around it.

Suddenly Tom starts and smiles; and an instant after, rises from the table, and walks out on the lawn. He has caught a glimpse of Helena gathering flowers in her front-yard.

"Hallo! May I come over?" he calls.

Helena turns from the white jasmine she is pulling, and sees him standing with one hand on the low palings just ready to vault over.

"No, indeed! You'd land in my verbena-bed!" she exclaims, laughing, and coming towards him, with her hands full of the fragrant white stars of jasmine. But, in defiance of her, he does spring, clears palings, flower bed, and all, and stands by her side, triumphant.

"Oh! Suppose you had fallen!" she says, half frightened, half proud of his strength and grace. Her grand handsome lover! Her sweet eyes fall as he takes her hand—both her hands, and all the sweet dewy blossoms she is carrying, and holds them in his warm firm clasp.

"If I could only say 'good-morning' as I said 'good night,'" he whispers, looking down at her fondly.

She is well worth looking at, this fair fresh young girl, with golden gleams in her waving brown hair, and a colour like a damask rose in her cheeks. The dress she wears is only a cheap white lawn, but it fits her lithe young figure to perfection, and is as fresh and pure as the jasmine-flowers themselves.

She looks up now, laughing, into her lover's dark eyes. She is thinking there never were such eyes before—eyes of "black velvet and fire"—and never a voice sweeter and tenderer than his as he calls her again "my own little Helena."

"Helena!" comes a quick, decided voice just at this instant. She starts violently. There stands Sybil by the palings, looking full in her face with eyes that are much more "fire" than "velvet."

Lena's colour has deepened very prettily under her lover's gaze. It turns to fire now. Cheeks and brow and throat turn vivid scarlet under Sybil's sharp eyes; and Lena feels that Sybil knows her secret.

"Good morning! Oh, Lena, *can* you lend me a jacket-pattern? I haven't one that fits decently," that black eyed young woman remarks, quietly,

"Yes, certainly," Lena replies—thinking: "What a goose I am!"

"I'll come over this minute, and get it, then." And Sybil runs round to the gate; and Tom has only time to whisper laughingly; "Never mind: we'll have all the evening together." Then he takes himself off to the village.

But they do not have all the evening together alone. Sybil is there, practising songs with Lena.

And the next evening she carries off Lena to sing with her at home; the Wyndhams' new grand being so superior to the little old piano at the Floyds'. Sybil seems seized with a sudden and violent mania for Helena's society; and when Mary Wyndham comes home, she follows her sister's example. Mary is gentler and sweeter than Sybil—also less clever and penetrating. But she is well managed by her elder sister. By-and-by it becomes apparent to Lena that they are "on guard" to prevent *tête-à-têtes* between Tom and herself.

She is half amused and half indignant.

"Ah! you are too late, my dears," she says to herself. "We know each other's hearts; and we could trust each other, if we never met except under your eyes." But they do meet of course. There are long summer-evening strolls together in the woods and fields outside of town, occasional drives in Tom's trap, with his handsome bay horse, and now then a quiet evening at Mr. Floyd's, when Sybil and Mary are detained at home, and no one else happens to drop in. Still it is not very satisfactory, and Tom chafes under it a little.

"Look here, Lena; I don't see anything of you: I don't know how it is" (Lena knows, but she does not tell him) "I hate secret engagements, anyhow. If people knew you belonged to me they wouldn't be always bothering round—"

"Didn't I say it wasn't an engagement?" Lena laughs.

"Yes. But that's nonsense, little girl. *I* think it one if you don't."

"Tom!"—Lena looks at him very seriously now—"I'm afraid you oughtn't to marry me. You ought to marry a brilliant woman of the world, to help you on in life. One with beauty, and sense, and fine manners, and—money."

"Very well, Miss Floyd. Find me a millionairess prettier, and cleverer, and better-mannered than you, and I'll consider the matter."

"Tom, she is found. She is coming to-morrow," Lena says, solemnly, but with a laugh in her eyes.

"Who?—what?—oh, Miss Rivington: Sybil's grand London friend! Yes, she's very 'swell.' I saw her at Mount Desert, last summer."

"I wonder it didn't occur to you to fall in love with her then. It was so obviously the proper thing to do."

"Why didn't it occur to you to fall in love with George Ridgeley, last summer. There was a good-looking fellow with a fortune ready made for you. But you let him go back to Liverpool 'all forlorn.' 'Why was this thus?'"

"Because—oh, because—you mustn't ask impertinent questions."

It is so pretty to see her blush, and laugh, and turn away her head! and so sweet to know that she has never loved anyone else but him—lucky Tom Wyndham!

CHAPTER III.

MISS RIVINGTON has been at the Wyndhams for two weeks. There is no word of her going away. The house is full of young guests—

gay, fashionable people; and there is always something exciting going on.

Lena does not see so much of Tom as she used. Of course, he is obliged by courtesy to pay some attention to the young ladies visiting his sisters. Lena knows that; but it is a little hard to see him go driving or riding by with Miss Rivington—almost always Miss Rivington—whilst she sits dull and lonely at home. She begins to wish that handsome, self-possessed young woman, with the blonde hair and miraculously-stylish and beautiful toilettes, would go away. She is not jealous, but she hates—yes, I fear she hates—whatever keeps Tom away.

"How do I look, Aunt Nannie?" she says, one day, as she turns from the mirror smilingly to consult her aunt's eyes.

"Lovely, my dear! Come and let your Uncle John see you."

Lena does look lovely. Her dress is only the "poor girl's livery"—white muslin; but it is of a soft sheer mull, that flows and floats around her like mist. She wears no ornaments but some old lace of Aunt Nannie's, and a cluster of creamy roses at her belt.

"Why, my little girl—how magnificent you are!" Uncle John says, kindly, while the children stand round her in a circle, admiring.

"Lena, I bet nobody there will have on as pretty a dress as yours," little Katie declares. Lena smiles, and kisses the earnest little face. But she knows her dress will be very poor and plain compared with many dresses that will be in Mrs. Wyndham's reception-rooms to-night.

Tom comes for her, and they go out into the soft summer starlight.

"Don't hurry, Lena," he says, as he draws her gloved hand through his arm and holds it clasped tightly. "These three minutes with you are worth all the evening to me."

After that does anyone think Lena envies Miss Rivington her wonderful dress, that looks as if it were woven of cobwebs covered with dew and sparkling in the moonlight? She is simply utterly happy.

"Miss Lena, how do you do? Will you—may I have this next waltz with you?"

She turns, and meets honest George Ridgeley's eyes. He is flushing and trembling like a girl.

"Why, Mr. Ridgeley! I didn't know you were here. I'm glad to see you." And she holds out her hand frankly, and smiles a welcome. She dances with him once—twice—three times during the evening.

"Lena, are you going to let that poor fellow singe his wings again?" whispers Tom, during the one waltz he is able to get with her.

"Who? Oh! Why, Tom, he has forgotten all that. I'm just an old friend, you know."

"Very likely," says Tom, dryly. "But I'd like to tell him you are engaged to me."

"No Tom, you won't—you mustn't!" Lena whispers, eagerly.

Tom looks at her rather strangely. The truth is, already he has heard Sybil and Mary laughing together about "Lena's flirtation with George Ridgeley," and he doesn't quite like it. When the waltz is over he finds her a seat, and stands looking moodily on, while George makes his way across the room towards her. But, five minutes afterwards, Lena sees Tom talking gaily with Miss Rivington, as he saunters up and down the wide hall with her.

"He is all devotion apparently," a very distinct, sharp old voice behind her says.

"Oh, that is Tom's way, you know," Sybil's voice responds gaily. "He's a dreadful flirt."

"Oh, we heard about them at Mount Desert, last year. But come, confess you would like her for a sister-in-law."

"Oh, of course we like it! There! Dear Mrs Morton, I don't know what Tom and Alice would say to me for breathing a word. I am so careless! Please don't betray me." Sybil slides away with a laugh; and Lena sits very still and quiet, with her heart throbbing fast and hard.

It is not true! She will not believe it! That Tom, who loves *her*—who is engaged to *her*—could— But, alas! she remembers that he is *not* engaged to her. How often has she herself declared that he is free—there is "no engagement." "They were only to trust each other." But if Tom finds he loves some one else better, she cannot blame him or reproach him. He is free! Her happiness turns to dust and ashes on her lips. Presently she slips out of the window near her, unnoticed (she has sent George away from her on some pretext), and glides like a ghost across the lawn. There are numbers of people straying about in the starlight. As she passes near one couple, she sees a glimmer of cobwebs strung with dew, and hears her lover's familiar laugh. Her lover! Is he hers or Alice Rivington's?

She glides away into deep shadow, and is gone. No one misses her but honest George, who comes hurriedly back to look for her, but fails to find her.

Two days after, Sybil comes over to Lena's, early.

"Sorry you had a headache yesterday, Lena. I wanted you to come over and see Alice again. Do you know she took *such* a fancy to you! She says your colour and the wave in your hair are just irresistible. Oh, by the way, did you know Tom went home with her yesterday?"

Sybil stops to laugh, and goes on again, gaily,—

"Yes, indeed! I wasn't surprised. Of course, I have been suspecting all the time. I confess I shall be perfectly delighted to have it all settled. She suits him and us so exactly."

"She is certainly very beautiful!" Lena manages to say, calmly.

"And so George Ridley is as devoted as ever, Lena?" Sybil exclaims, presently. "My dear child, what are you thinking about not to accept him? Take my advice, my love, and if he asks you again, say yes. He's the best fellow—and no end of money."

And Sybil goes away, leaving Helena to break her heart with doubts that are almost terrible certainties. Tom gone with Alice Rivington, and without a word to her? No message—no letter?

"Oh! if he does not love me, why did he tell me so a thousand times? Was it only flirting after all? Sybil says he is a flirt. Oh, what shall I do without him? Oh, if I only knew the truth!"

The truth, poor little Helena? Sybil could have told it if she had chosen. Sybil knows that when Tom had discovered, the night before Alice Rivington left, that his father wished him to go North on business, he had gone over to see Lena. "Lena has a headache, and mamma says we mustn't let anybody disturb her," little Katie says, at the door. In fact, Lena had fallen asleep; and before she waked, careless little Katie had forgotten all about Tom's visit.

But Tom made another effort to reach Lena.

"Look here, John! There's a letter on my mantel-piece I want you to take over to Mr. Floyd's," Sybil heard—overheard—Tom saying to one of the servants, just before the carriage came to take them to the train, which passed the station at the "unearthly" hour of five A.M.

"Yes, sir," John answers, promptly. He is not apt to forget Mr. Tom's orders.

But in five minutes after the carriage leaves the door, Sybil slips upstairs into Tom's room. There it is, on the clock upon the mantelpiece—a large white envelope, directed in Tom's free bold hand to "Miss Helena Floyd." Sybil stands looking at it, and wishing she dared—she scarcely knows what. Presently she puts out her hand to take it; but—perhaps her hand is not very steady—as she touches it, it slips back, and disappears behind the clock. It is out of sight entirely. John will never think of looking behind the clock, and no one will ever dream it was her fault. Her fault? Why, it—it was almost an accident! She hadn't meant to hide it!

A footstep on the stairs startles her, and she flies out of the room frightened, trembling, yet glad. And John does not find the letter, for she hears him, a little while after, remarking to Patty, the housemaid,—

"Mr. Tom says he left a letter on the mantelpiece, but there ain't none there. I s'pose he put it in his pocket, an' forgot it."

"Mr. Tom is mighty forgitful," responds Patty.

CHAPTER IV.

Tom has been gone a week. All day long Lena goes about the house trying to be herself. She tries in vain. The song has died out of her life.

She hopes, and watches, and despairs; starts at a footstep; is restless, and feverish, and wretched; and spends nearly all of her nights in crying. No wonder Aunt Nannie thinks she is looking badly, and wants to give her quinine!

And George Ridgeley adds to her trouble by renewing his love-making so earnestly, so pleadingly, that she is almost bewildered by it. Sometimes she feels half-tempted to end it all by accepting him. Pride tempts her that way. If she accepts him, then no one will ever know—not even Tom himself—that her heart is broken by Tom's faithlessness. And, perhaps, after all, she may learn to love George. She cannot live without love; and she knows George loves her. He has adored her, and no one else, ever since he was fifteen years old, and first came to the village school. she half makes up her mind to say yes. The crisis comes one evening when she is walking with George in the woods outside of the village. He turns suddenly, and says,—

"Look here, Lena! Do you think anyone will ever love you better than I do? Don't you know I'd give my life to make you happy? Can't you trust yourself with me? Oh, Lena, say yes, dear!" he urges, vehemently.

He is so good—so honest—and she is so wretched! Lena almost yields. Her hand lies in his. 'Alas! she does not hear the tramp of a horse on the soft carpet of green sward. At a little distance a horseman passes slowly along a path that crosses the one they are in. It is Tom Wyndham—the Fates will it so; and he sees Helena sitting with her hand in George Ridgely's hand—sees it, and rides away unseen by them.

If he had waited one moment, he would have seen Helena suddenly snatch her hand away, cover her face, and sob out,—

"Oh, George, I can't! It wouldn't be right. I don't love you, my dear, good George; and I would only make you miserable." And George is silent for a moment, with the bitterness of death in his heart. Then he soothes her gently; and he begs her not to cry, and not to mind him. He only wants her to be happy, he adds. You see, it is a little gleam of common sense that has saved Helena and honest George—saved them from a misery infinitely greater than any pain that wrings their hearts now.

But how did Tom come to be there just at the wrong time? He has come home tired, worried, out of spirits; and Sybil gives him some dinner, and chatters to him while he eats it.

"How is Miss Helena Floyd, Sybil? She wasn't well when I went away." He tries to say it carelessly.

"Lena? Oh, she's very well. Everybody says she's engaged to George Ridgeley. They're out together all the time. I saw them go to walk a few minutes ago."

Tom says not another word, but goes away, gets his horse, and rides off into the country. He is coming slowly back, after a long gallop, when he passes through the pleasant by-path, and sees the proof of Sybil's news. At least it

looks like proof. But Tom thinks the matter over as he rides home. "Some fellows would just give up, and go off somewhere, and never see her again, and be as miserable as the devil—for life. That's the way it is in novels. But maybe there's something I don't understand. Perhaps she did write to me, and her letter was lost. Maybe she's just doing a little bit of flirting with Ridgeley. It isn't like her, and—well, for that matter, she may have been flirting with me. Appearances are against you, my little Lena; but I'm going to give myself one more chance for happiness, anyway."

But as he feels sure that Ridgeley will be at Mr. Floyd's in the evening, he waits until morning—and hasn't a pleasant night of it either. Sometimes pride and wounded love and anger almost make him determine to ride away with the morning light, and never see her again. But common sense gets the best of it; and soon after breakfast he stands in the shaded flower-scented little parlour at Mr. Floyd's, and listens for Helena's entering footsteps. He hears her coming at last; not with the quick joyous tap-tap of her heeled slippers along the hall that he is accustomed to. She comes slowly. The door opens, and the slender white-robed figure stands still almost in the doorway. Tom's heart beats rapidly. "It is all over, by George!" he thinks. Then he sees her face: pale, with dark shadows under her eyes; and she stands silently, and looks at him with great mournful eyes.

CHAPTER V.

"Lena! What on earth have you been doing to yourself? Oh, my, love tell me why you look so!" he cries.

He hurries up to her, shocked and alarmed, and takes her cold little hand.

"Tell me, Lena; you have been ill, and I did not know it?"

A world of love and tenderness thrills in his voice, and brings the colour to Lena's cheeks, so lately so pale.

Their eyes meet: and then—how it happens neither can tell; but in an instant she is sobbing in his arms, and he is whispering fond caressing words into her ear. There is really not much to explain after that. It was all a mistake, that a few words clear up. And Lena manages to tell her story without a word of blame for Sybil. She will not say anything to make Tom angry with her. Why should she? Will he love her any more because he loves his sister less?

"And now, little girl, I'm going to end all this nonsense. If people had known you and I belonged to each other, you wouldn't have been breaking your heart over idle gossip; and I wouldn't have had to go mooning around for a week, believing you had thrown me over for Ridgeley. You see, if I hadn't got that into my head I've have written again."

"What are you going to do, Tom?" she asks, as he puts on his hat with a determined air.

"To beard the lion—a couple of lions—in their respective dens," he answers, as he walks away laughing.

"To marry my niece Helena? Why, bless my soul, Tom! if the child wants to marry you, there isn't anybody else I'd rather give her to. But I never thought of such a thing as Helena's marrying!" This from dear good absent-minded Uncle John. Not a very formidable "lion" certainly.

Tom wrings his hand gratefully, and then goes off to his father's study. The Judge is busy with some important papers, and does not even look up as Tom enters.

"Can I speak to you a moment, father?" Tom asks, huskily.

The Judge looks up now, nods, and pushes up his spectacles.

"I think it right to tell you, sir, that I am engaged to be married to Helena Floyd," the young man says, very quietly.

"Ah!" The Judge looks at him keenly, but does not frown. There is a moment's silence, and Tom speaks again:

"I hope you do not disapprove of it sir?"

The Judge shakes his head. "No; but I imagined, from something Sybil said, that you were rather attracted by Miss Rivington. Her fortune would have been an attraction to most young men."

"Well, sir, not to me," Tom says soberly. "I rather think I'd rather like my money to be my own and not my wife's. And, you see, the fact is—Helena and I love each other dearly." This last sentence is uttered rather impetuously, and Tom colours a little.

The Judge nods again, and smiles quietly.

Then he pulls down his spectacles, and goes on with his papers; and Tom slips off for a long happy morning with Helena.

A vigorous search in Tom's room reveals the missing letter behind the clock. No one ever suspects that Sybil put it there. She is so glad not to be found out that she forgives Lena for spoiling her plans about Alice Rivington. She even becomes very fond of her again—as all the Wyndham household are. As for the Judge, he has been heard to say more than once, as he kisses Lena's soft cheek, or gently smooths her bright hair: "My dear, you'll be the very wife for Tom! You have more common sense than any girl I know!"

A. J.

FACETIÆ.

A game often heard of, but never played—"Cricket on the hearth."

Mountains may not have mouths or noses, but there are plenty of mountaineers.

"Minnie has been in to see me to-day," said little five-year-old, "and she behaved like a lady. "And I hope you did too," said her mother." "Yes, indeed, I did; I turned somersets for her on the bed."

A new Vintage.—Old Soaker (at the club, dreamily): "I say, waiter, that's the best wine I've had for ages. Bring another bottle." Waiter: "You've had no wine, sir. What you drank was the Worcestershire sauce."

Old Mistress: "Kate, what was that noise last night at the front door?" Young Maid: "The cats, mum." Mistress: "Cats! Now when I was young cats did not wear tall hats and smoke cigars." Maid (unabashed): "Yes, mum; times have changed."

Fond Mother: "Doctor, what seems to be the cause of Willie's trouble?" Doctor: "Some foreign substance in the stomach, I should say." "Oh, yes—those dreadful Irish potatoes! I will tell our grocer to-morrow that he *positively must* bring us some English potatoes."

"Why, Charles, what's the matter?" "Matter! Why, I've just met that young puppy Jones that I lent that five shillings to, and he said he'd pull my nose for me if I bothered him for it again! What do you think of that?" "I think he'll have hands full if he does, Charles." And now there is a coolness between them.

"No, Julia," said her mother; "you can't marry young Freezer, the son of the ice merchant. His father, I have been informed, has not harvested a single ton of ice this winter." "But, mother," pleaded the daughter, "he has seventy-five thousand tons left over from last season." "Oh, that makes a difference. His father is therefore a millionaire, and you may marry him at once."

A man who wanted to learn what profession he would have his son enter put him in a room with a Bible, an apple, and a sovereign. If he found him when he returned reading the Bible, he would make a clergyman of him; if eating the apple, a farmer; and if interested in the sovereign, a banker. When he returned he found the boy sitting on the Bible, with the sovereign in his pocket, and the apple almost devoured. He made a lawyer of him.

"Is that about the right length, sir?" asked a skilful barber, as he finished cutting his customer's hair. "I like the sides and back, was the response, "but I wish you would make it a little longer on the top."

Only Half the Joe.—Hobbs: "I understand that Dobson's wife is a German, and that he mastered the German language to win her." Jones: "Well, he must have expended all his energies on the language then. He has never mastered her."

Said Paddleford to his wife, on the way back from the museum, "I am firmly convinced that women have an innate, natural, constitutional love of the horrible." "Good thing for you!" she retorted, "or you might have been a bachelor to your dying day."

A Lucky Girl.—American Girl (at Windsor Castle): "Porter, is there any chance to get a glimpse of the Queen?" Gentleman at the Gate: "I am not the porter. I am the Prince of Wales." American Girl: "How lucky I am! Is your mother in?"

Legal Advice.—Mrs. De Temper: "I am not happy with my husband. Shall I drive him away?" Lawyer: "His life is insured in your favour, isn't it?" "Yes. I made him do that before we married." "Well, don't drive him off. He'll die quicker where he is."

Freshleigh: "Don't you feel chilly, Miss Beaconhill?" Miss Beaconhill: "Yes, I *am* rather cold, Mr. Freshleigh." Freshleigh (meaningly): "Feel as though you'd like a little something around you?" Miss Beaconhill (crushingly): "Not a *little* something, Mr. Freshleigh."

A Familiar Heading.—Wife (glancing over a newspaper): "Here's an article headed 'A Terrible Wreck.' I wonder what it's about. Shall I read it?" Husband: "No-o; most likely it's a patent medicine advertisement, or else an obituary notice of some new daily paper that was started to fill a long-felt want."

Managing a Wife.—Jinks: "You don't look well, Winks." Winks: "No; that new cook of ours is giving me the dyspepsia." "Send her away." "She's neat about the house and very respectful, and my wife won't part with her." "Well, Winks, you'll be ill if she isn't got rid of. Make love to her." "By Jove! Never thought of it."

Mr. Job Shuttle is the mildest sort of a man, but he can't endure all things in silence. "Now, Job," said Mrs. Shuttle, "I propose that we go nowhere next summer, but just stay at home and enjoy our own house." "See here, my dear, how can a man enjoy himself that way? There's nobody round home, you know." "Nobody? You didn't used to say so." "Great Scott! a man can't be young for ever!"

"Young man," said a shopkeeper to an applicant for employment, "how are you on grammar?" "Pretty fair, sir." "Can you give me the principal parts of the verb 'to do?'" "Do—done," stammered the youth, somewhat confused. "That's enough for all ordinary purposes," said the merchant. "First do, and then dun. Bear this sequence in mind when you're left in charge of the business, and you'll suit me first-rate."

It Made a Difference.—"For goodness sake, Maulsby!" exclaimed Frisby, upon entering his office and finding a friend enjoying a smoke, "why don't you take that foul-smelling pipe out and bury it? I don't think I ever smelt anything quite so rank." "I agree with you," said Maulsby. "It's your pipe, Frisby. You left it down at my place last night; and, finding some of your tobacco here, I thought I'd have a smoke while awaiting your appearance. As you say, it is about the worst——." "What! my favourite pipe—my old friend," interrupted Frisby. "Why, you don't know, my boy, how I have missed the treasure! I feared I had lost it." And Frisby took the pipe; but, instead of burying the "foul smelling" thing, he was soon puffing it vigorously.

SOCIETY.

Her Majesty will remain at Windsor Castle for some time, owing to an interesting event expected in the family.

Mr. Phelps, late United States Minister to this country, was entertained, with Mrs. Phelps to a sumptuous banquet by the Vanderbilts on arriving in New York. The centre of the dining-table was a bank of rare orchids and feathery ferns, and thirty covers were laid. There was a menu of twelve courses, with six different wines, and a choice band played during the repast.

The University of Dublin Choral Society gave their first concert for the season in the Examination Hall, Trinity College, Dublin, recently, when Gade's dramatic cantata "Psyche" was given, with full orchestral accompaniments. The principal soloists were Fraulein Pauline Cramer, who sustained the title *rôle*, and Mr. D'Alton, whose voice was heard to much advantage in the music allotted to Eros. Fraulein Cramer possesses a powerful soprano voice, and her rendering of the several soles was received with loud applause, especially in the beautiful song "Kind-hearted be; regard my weeping." Sir Robert Stewart conducted and managed his choir and band most excellently, the orchestral music having no harshness in its strongest passage. The concert was very largely attended, and at its conclusion "God Save the Queen" was sung, and three cheers given for the Provost, who was present.

A successful concert was held in the Queen-street Hall, Edinburgh, in aid of the Piershill Home for Cavalry Soldiers. It was under the patronage of Major-General Lyttelton-Annesley, commanding the North-British District, and the colonel and officers of the 15th (King's) Hussars, at present stationed at Piershill. The following artists took part in the programme: Miss Gillespie, Miss Duncan, Miss Cameron, Mr. Dunsmore, Mr. Van den Bergh, Major Graham Thomson, Mr. John Longmore, and Herr Gallrein, with Mr. Kuntz as accompanist, and the band of the 15th (King's) Hussars also contributed several items. The platform was decorated with palms, supplied by Sir John and Lady Don Wauchope and Mrs. MacDougall of Woodburn, and the non commissioned officers of the regiment acted as ushers. The sum realised from the concert amounted to about £80.

Miss Alice Roselli announces her grand evening concert in May, under the special patronage of H.R.H. the Princess Christian and H.R.H. the Princess Frederica of Hanover, the Duke and Duchess of Westminster, the Duke and Duchess of Wellington, the Duchess Dowager of Buccleuch, and the Countess of Errol.

An amateur vocal and instrumental concert was held in the Public Hall, Auchinblae, Kincardineshire, on the 22nd ult., in aid of the fund for providing a pavilion in the park used for the recreation of the villagers. The concert was under the patronage of the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Gammell, of Drumtocky Castle; Captain and Mrs. Burnett, of Monboddo, and others, many of whom were present. Sir George Balfour, K.C.B., M.P. for the county, was unable to come, but handed in a contribution of £5 towards the fund. The room was crowded, and the programme well received.

The other day a dramatic entertainment was given at Brompton Hospital, which consisted of the comedietta "A Cup of Tea" and the operetta of "Quid pro Quo." The characters in the first were performed by Miss Sofie Jones, Mr. R. Vaile, Mr. W. Cyril Beaumont, and Mr. R. Leopold; and in the operetta by Mrs. Gourand and Mr. Cyril Beaumont. Miss Sofie Jones was an excellent Lady Clara Seymour, and Miss Gourand an equally charming Lady Ethel. The whole performance was exceedingly well carried out, amidst frequent laughter and applause.

STATISTICS.

No year since 1879 has had so small an amount of sunshine in England as 1888.

The four new States admitted into the Union exceed in area the original thirteen States. Dakota exceeds in territory New England, New York, New Jersey, and West Virginia. Dakota's population is estimated at 600,000, while Montana had, by the census of 1887, 175,000; Washington, 145,000.

There are used annually in the United States about 15,000,000 bushels of wheat in various manufactures, such as starch, food preparations, sizing for cloth and paper; 50,000,000 bushels are required for seeding, and 285,000,000 bushels for food consumption, which leaves only about 50,000,000 bushels for export. If these averages are kept up an increase in the wheat area of the country is imperatively demanded.

GEMS.

Old age has deformities enough of its own; do not add to it the deformity of vice.

We cannot control the evil tongues of others, but a good life enables us to despise them.

Avoid lawsuits above all things; they affect your conscience, impair your health, and dissipate your property.

A passion for flowers is, I really think, the only one which long sickness leaves untouched with its chilling influence.

Keep your conduct abreast of your conscience, and very soon your conscience will be illumined by the radiance of God.

Affectation in any part of our carriage is lighting up a candle to our defects, and never fails to make us take notice of, either as wanting sense or sincerity.

The advice of our friends must be attended with a judicious reserve; we must not give ourselves up to it, and blindly follow their determination, right or wrong.

Ruskin said that childhood often holds a truth with its feeble fingers which the grasp of manhood cannot retain, which it is the pride of utmost age to recover.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

One Egg Cake.—One and a half cup sugar, one cup sweep milk, one-half cup butter, two and one-half cups flour, one egg, one teaspoonful soda, two of cream tartar.

Hasty Pudding.—Beat half a cup of butter and the same of sugar to a cream, add the yolks of three eggs, two cups of cooked rice, and the beaten whites of the eggs; serve with sauce.

Drop Cookies.—One-half cup of butter, one cup of sugar, two-thirds of a cup of sweet milk, one egg, a small teaspoonful of soda, two of cream tartar, and two and one-half cups of flour. Drop with a spoon, and put a raisin in the centre. Bake quickly a light brown.

Baked Apples.—Pare a dozen cooking apples, cut in halves, and remove the core, lay in a buttered baking dish, cover with sugar; take one half cup of butter, rub one tablespoonful of flour into it, and add one pint of boiling water, pour over the apples, and bake until the apples are tender.

Crumb Pudding.—One quart of sweet milk, one pint of bread crumbs, three quarters of a cup of sugar, yolks of four eggs, butter size of an egg, flavour with lemon; bake in a slow oven; when done spread over a layer of jelly, whip the whites of the eggs to a froth, add one cup of powdered sugar, pour over the jelly, and bake a light brown. Serve cold.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Ambition thinks no face so beautiful as that which looks from under a crown.

The Doll's Mission.—The doll is one of the most imperious necessities, and at the same time one of the most charming instincts of female childhood. To care for, to clothe, to adorn, to dress, to undress, to dress over again, to teach, to scold a little, to rock, to cuddle, to put to sleep, to imagine that something is somebody—all the future of woman is there. Even when musing and prattling, while making little wardrobes and little baby clothes, while sewing little dresses little bodices and little jackets, the child becomes a little girl, the little girl becomes a great girl, the great girl becomes a woman. The first baby takes the place of the last doll.

Columbus and his Sailors.—As the sailors of Columbus were to him in his voyage of discovery, so are our faculties to us in the endeavour of our spirit, and so to the witness for truth are his fellow-men in the work in which he has called them. The sailors said: "Where is the land?" and again, "where is the land?" When the continuing east-wind—the trade wind—blew it seemed to the sailors an omen of fear. "Will it not blow us on and on for ever?" So in the advance of the mind in the search of spritual and political truth and good, or even in the pursuit of science. The impulse of a great directive thought, though it is as a wind from God—His trade wind, which will conduct us to, and then facilitate our intercourse with, some now and now to be discovered land—produces, as we are advanced on ward, distrust and fear. Though our faculties heartily were with us at the first, and though our fellow-men entered the ship of endeavour with pride and hope, yet now there is anger. The captain is called fool. It is asked, "Where is the land? The sea is endless, and the wind will blow us over it for ever and ever."

The Brides of Venice.—The girls were dressed in long robes of white, with loosened hair interwoven with threads of gold, and in a rich barge were carried to the church of St. Peter, followed by a cortège of gaily decorated gondolas, with music and singing, the Doge and Signory accompanying the procession. Each maiden bore in her hand a small box containing her dowry, and met her appointed husband in the church. Mass was celebrated, and the bishop officiated in the marriage ceremonies. This was the beginning of the fête, which lasted a whole week. With the growth of luxury and laxity of morals the festival lost its original character, and it became necessary to limit its observance, and during the Genovese war, in the fourteenth century, the celebration was neglected and fell into disuse. An incident which happened in the tenth century during the observance of this festival has long been a favourite theme of artists and poets, and illustrates too well the spirit of the day and the isolation of the new republic to be omitted here. The Trieste pirates long watched an opportunity to rob the festal barge of its treasures, both human and monetary, and one fine morning of St. Mary's eve they burst open the doors of the church, surprised the congregation and escaped with the brides and the treasures. The Doge, who was present, urged immediate pursuit. Every boat capable of carrying rowers was manned, and put to sea in the greatest haste. Venice rose as one man to join in the pursuit of the pirates, and to assist in the recovery of the brides. The enthusiasm of the Venetians was so irresistible that the pirates were overtaken and beaten in one of the entrances to the lagoon. Not a pirate escaped, such was the fury of the pursuers. The brides were recovered entirely unharmed, and the ceremony of marriage took place with increased pomp the same evening.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

—o—

W. A. Y.—No remuneration whatever.

DAISY.—Yes, if she has friends out there with whom she could stay.

MOTHER-IN-LAW.—*Again* is pronounced "agen"; *pique* as if spelt "peek."

M. S. K.—You can obtain such a book from any good publisher. We cannot advertise addresses.

JACK SMITH.—Such things have been advertised, but they are ridiculous failures. Leave nature alone.

DOT.—We are constantly giving recipes for both. Keep the hands covered as much as possible, and the hair frequently and regularly cut.

MARY TRACY.—A note addressed to the manager of the theatre named would no doubt obtain the information which we regret we cannot supply.

TALLY-HO.—A quart of water, in which a piece of lime about the size of a walnut has been dissolved, should be applied once a day to the hair, and it should be brushed frequently. For the hands use glycerine if they are rough. Charles means "strong," Mary "bitter" or "a star."

H. H. T.—A couple of hunters would be necessary, a pair of carriage horses, and say two for ordinary use. This is the least you could do with under the circumstances.

T. R. C.—To make the hair grow, distil as slowly as possible two pounds of honey, a handful of rosemary, and twelve handfuls of the tendrils of grape-vine infused in a gallon of new milk.

W. P.—We regret we cannot inform you. Write to the governor of the gaol at the place named, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope and he will no doubt supply the information.

FREDA.—You are not too old to study languages. George Eliot studied many tongues after she was thirty. The time you would take to learn them would depend on your power of acquiring knowledge.

D. G. V.—Socialism, in its widest sense, is any scheme or project which has for its object to do away with the hardships of life and bring about equality amongst men through the instrumentality of the State.

F. W. A.—Be natural. It is hard to personate and act a part long; for where truth is not at the bottom, nature will always be endeavouring to return, and will peep out and betray herself one time or other.

C. C.—A burn is generally more serious than a scald. Apply flour thickly over the part, bandaging it with strips of linen. Relief will be at once experienced. Cotton-wool is also excellent in such a case, but flour is generally more handy.

E. JACKSON.—In justice to our other correspondents we cannot devote the space to answering examination questions. Submit them to your teacher, or hunt them up in text-books for yourself. You will never pass by having the work done for you.

F. F.—The only course is to seek her society and make yourself agreeable to her. You must be enterprising and urge your suit with all the ardour and tact which you possess, or you will not succeed. You have let the matter rest too long, and now the lady may be already won.

CHARLIE.—1. It is generally supposed that the cock that crowed when Peter denied Our Saviour is meant by the expression referred to. 2. It entirely depends on the height of the lady, and for what purpose the dress is required—indoor, outdoor, home, reception, balls or parties, &c., &c.

A LOVER OF THE READER.—You write nicely already. You can only permanently darken your hair by permanently injuring it. The portrait is very badly taken, but it seems to represent a pleasant-looking lady of rather determined character. It shall be returned on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.

DELTA.—A good tooth powder is made of one ounce of powdered charcoal and three ounces of prepared chalk. Perfume with orris root. A tooth wash that will help extirpate all tartarous adhesion, arrest decay, and induce a healthy action in the gums, is made as follows: Dissolve two ounces of borax in three pounds of boiling water, and before it is cold add one teaspoonful of spirits of camphor, and bottle for use. A tablespoonful of this mixture, mixed with an equal quantity of tepid water, and applied daily with a tolerably soft brush, will have the desired effect.

LOTTIE.—We commend your spirit for economising, but don't allow it to verge on the mean. We will gladly help you to the best of our abilities, and hope to hear from you again, especially when any difficulties present themselves. A stock-pot is the principal "save-all." A furnishing ironmonger will supply you with one, and, when once its possessor, never let it lie idling by. By this means, from mere scraps you can have a constant supply of good, nutritious stock, which will form the base of all soups and gravies.

E. C.—School teaching is a most honourable employment for a lady, and for a graduate of a university it is very easy to obtain a situation. However, if you should not do so, you could be a governess in a private family, a book-keeper, a correspondent, or a type-writer. There are always situations opened for educated women. A nice gift is an embroidered set for a bureau—pincushion, bottles covered with satin, and mats made of lace and ribbon. A fancy scarf painted or embroidered is always acceptable, or a black satin or silk apron trimmed with white lace and embroidery is also very often sent to a friend.

S. W. S.—The quotation "The quarrels of lovers are the renewal of love," is from the Latin poet Terence. Butler has reproduced the idea in a slightly different form in his Hudibras.

META.—If you cannot make up your mind as to which of the two young men you love best you cannot be very deeply in love with either. Wait a little while before giving a decided answer.

R. B.—You are both too young to marry, and this probably is the cause of your betrothed's hesitation. In a year or two it will disappear. Do not be in a hurry, but enjoy your happiness.

E. A.—Endeavour to be amiable and not to dispute with your mother-in-law over trifles. On important matters your husband will aid you. Every wife should maintain the dignity of her position.

M. M.—Sowens is a nutritious article of food used in Scotland. In England it is called flummery. It is made from the husk of the oat by a process not unlike that by which common starch is made.

N. T. S.—A breakwater is a structure or contrivance to break the force of waves, and protect a harbour or anything or place which is exposed to the inroad of the water. Usually a wall is erected for the purpose.

E. N.—To make brown bread, take one quart of rye meal (not flour), two quarts of corn meal, two-thirds of a cup of treacle, into which beat a teaspoonful of soda. Add a teaspoonful of salt and mix quite soft with boiling water, and bake.

L. D.—The verbal disposition of property has no legal force whatever; and, in the absence of a will, the widow can take one-third of the personal property, and her dower interest in the real estate. The rest of the personal estate will be equally divided between the children of the deceased, while the eldest son will take the realty.

A KINGDOM FAIR.

"My mind to me a kingdom is,"
Where I alone have rightful sway;
There all is subject to my will,
And need but my commands obey.
'Tis to its bowers of solitude
I fly when heavily oppressed
With troublous cares; 'tis there I seek
And find a perfect rest.

What though my habitation here
Is but a lowly little cot;
Though joys are rare, and friends are few,
Meagre my fare and hard my lot!
Away, away! on airy wings
I hasten to my kingdom fair,
Cares, like discarded vestments, fall,
And I am happy there!

My kingdom has dim cloisters, where
I meet the ghosts of vanished years;
Some carry roses in their hands,
And some are crowned with glistening tears,
While others drop their mournful eyes
And pass me with averted face—
But all is still, and all's at peace,
Within this tranquil place.

Oh, kingdom fair! wherein I dream
Away my only happy hours,
No prying gaze shall see within
My sacred haunts, my silent bowers!
Thou art my kingdom! No strange hand
Shall hold the sceptre over thee!
I am thy queen by right divine,
For God gave thee to me!

C. G. T.

J. J.—Your guardian has been too indulgent, and your brother-in-law is right. You are too young to marry, and it is foolish in you to imagine that you are in love with one whom you have never seen. When you are older you will regard this affair as childish. Break off the correspondence at once. The gentleman probably regards you as a little girl, and is amused with your letters. You write very nicely.

R. T. C.—The proper time for young ladies to marry is when they feel competent to assume the responsibilities of matrimony. They should also be sure that the man of their choice is equally fitted to love, honour, and cherish them, and not marry offhand, with the mistaken idea that it is absolutely necessary to do so. It is far better for a woman to live a life of single-blessedness than to blight her after existence by selecting a worthless husband.

B. F. G.—As you have no proof of the death of your husband, it naturally follows that you are still his wife in the eyes of the law, and cannot marry until a divorce has been obtained. Even then it will be as difficult to prove desertion on his part as it would be to certify to his death. Our advice would be to consult a lawyer on the subject, and obtain from him instructions as to the best way to proceed. We do not know what would be the charges for such consultation.

JUGGINS, JUN.—You can hardly represent father of the bride and best man to the husband. As a rule the parties go separately to the church, the father, or person who is to give away the bride, leading the bride and being followed by the best man and chief bridesmaid. The bride takes the left arm. You would go to church in the same carriage as the bride, and the other would be occupied by the bridesmaids. In returning the bride and bridegroom occupy the first carriage. The wedding presents should be sent to the bride at the latest on the day before the wedding.

C. S. S.—Friday has been an unlucky day ever since the introduction of the Christian era (owing to the crucifixion on that day), and has been a fast day with a large portion of the Christian Church.

N. N.—Mardigras is a French phrase and stands for what in English is Shrove Tuesday; that is, the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. It is the last day of the carnival in countries where the carnival is celebrated.

E. W. T.—A clinical baptism is that administered to persons on a sick bed. A clinical lecture is a discourse delivered at the bedside of the sick, or from notes taken at the bedside, by a physician, with a view to practical instruction.

W. F. P.—Perth, in the United States, or the point on which it stands, was called by the Indians Ambo (Amboy). It was settled by a colony from Scotland, who named it Perth in honour of the Earl of Perth, one of the proprietors: but finally it took both names—Perth Amboy.

J. J.—Why are you dissatisfied with the emerald in your engagement ring? The emerald signifies happiness in love, and domestic felicity. Your lover probably had that in his thoughts when he presented it to you, and did not imagine how much better a diamond would have pleased you.

H. F. R.—You are not acting honestly, and the sooner you do so act the wiser and better. No young woman can treat two men as betrothed lovers without injustice to all the parties concerned. Act according to the dictates of your heart and conscience, and you will not make a mistake.

E. A.—Until you are engaged to be married do not tolerate any such interference with your maidenly freedom. The young man had better learn self-control and cure himself of such unreasonable jealousy before marriage. You are too young to be thinking seriously of love and marriage.

A. X.—1. We know of no accepted interpretation of it. 2. Consult any experienced physician in regular practice. 3 Court-martial is pronounced as if spelled kort-marshal; the accent on the first syllable; Khan, kan; cynosure, sin-o-shur or si-no-shur. In *fiancée*, each e is pronounced as a.

C. N. S.—You have no right to keep your engagement from the knowledge of your parents, and it is very indiscreet and improper for you to enter into an engagement without their knowledge and consent. You are too young to trust your own judgment in such a serious matter. It is rather premature.

C. T. R.—The king who was sometimes called the "Napoleon of Peace," was Louis Philippe. It is said that the king liked to be called by this appellation, because it was "in allusion to the great increase in wealth and the steady physical progress of the French nation during his reign of eighteen years."

F. F. S.—1. William Wordsworth was the poet laureate of England who preceded Alfred Tennyson. The latter was installed in 1850. 2. The advice, "Put your trust in God, but mind to keep your powder dry," was given to his soldiers by Oliver Cromwell as he and his troops were about to cross a river to attack an opposing army.

L. D. G.—Boil two parts of acetate of copper, and one part of bitartrate of potash in eight parts of water, until the solution is reduced to half its bulk; filter through a cloth, and you will then have a green ink that will undoubtedly prove satisfactory. The best kind of green ink requires a great deal of careful manipulation by an experienced person.

L. V.—Act loyally and with discretion. You are pledged to marry the young lady, and, since you have won her love, you must endeavour to return it. Do not seek a release until incompatibility of temper and character have shown beyond a doubt that you are unsuited to each other. Love can be cultivated, and grows by association and habit.

ROSA.—Be guided by the advice of your mother, and do not allow anyone to persuade you to array your immature judgment against her ripe experience in the ways of the world. Your aunt should be more honourable than to advise deceit in a girl of fifteen years, and you should therefore close your ears to the voice of the tempter. Wait until you are eighteen or nineteen years of age before thinking of men and matrimony.

L. B. W.—The French law does not recognise a marriage that may be legal in the country where it takes place as legal in France if it does not conform to the provisions of the French statute. Not a few unprincipled Frenchmen have contracted such marriages in England, and have repudiated their wives on reaching France. According to English law, a marriage that is legal where it is contracted is legal in England.

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